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A Nazi Plot?

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GERMANY has gone this week from purgatory to hell. The burning of the Reichstag building was the signal for an outburst of savage decrees, of wholesale arrests and of blood-curdling threats against all adversaries of the regime. The Nazi leaders, of course, seized upon this arson as "a heaven-sent opportunity." A great many people believe that it was not Providence, but the Nazis themselves, who arranged it, for it is incredible that this foreign incendiary could have been left free to do all he did in the building without the custodians, and others behind them, knowing anything about it. The pretence that it was a plot of the German Communist Party, which had everything to gain by keeping quiet with its enemies in power, is too thin to take in any sane man; but unhappily insanity is widespread in Germany to-day, and the lie will help the Government in fomenting the fear of the populace and the fury of their own gunmen against the Reds. Nor have the Government been content even with that. They have treated the Socialists as accessories, on the alleged confession of the criminal that he had some connections with them.

A Monstrous Plan

Among the rumours with which Berlin and every town in Prussia are buzzing, one stands out more monstrous than all the rest. A plan, it is said, has been prepared which will begin with a staged attempt on Hitler's life on Saturday night. Then, when the streets have been cleared of their panic-stricken crowds an army of Nazi assassins will visit the houses that harbour Communists, Socialists, Jews, pacifists and other evilly disposed persons, and ruthlessly "bump them off." A Bartholomew's Eve massacre in Berlin in 1933 sounds utterly fantastic. But we have evidence—and so has every newspaper office in London—of a character and from sources which it is exceedingly difficult to doubt, that this plan is a fact. We can only hope that it will be abandoned now that it has been exposed as it has been in the foreign press. The German press is completely muzzled, but the story has spread in Germany as well as elsewhere and a fake assassination is not easy to carry out when it has been announced beforehand. But that the Nazis mean business—or, in plain words, a Reign of Terror—is evident, and we shall be agreeably surprised if blood does not flow pretty freely during the week-end.

Hitler as Dictator

Terrorism may well give Hitler his majority at the polls on Sunday. Whether it does or whether it does not, it will not matter a row of pins, since Fascism is now to rule whatever the opinions of the German people. His victory gives his cut-throat followers the opportunity, which he will probably not have the power, even if he has the will, to deny them, of wreaking their hatred on their

enemies and precipitating the civil war that seems inevitable. There is a possibility (we put it no higher than that) that Herr von Papen and the Junkers may upset the Nazi apple-cart. They have no more love for Hitler than he for them, and they know that as soon as he has consolidated his position he will rid himself of them. If, with the help of the army, they could strike a blow now, they might oust him. But it must be now or never. In any case, the outlook for Germany is grim. Hitler, we are told, will take his cue from Mussolini. But he cannot take Mussolini's brains. He is a man who can destroy, but he has shown no capacity whatever for any constructive ideas, and one result of his rule seems likely to be a split with Bavaria, which is reported to be looking to the Wittelsbach succession as a better alternative to Fascism. Of the effects of this Brown Terror on the whole European situation it is too soon to speak. But they can scarcely be other than disastrous.

The Japanese Advance

The opening stages of the battle in Jehol have gone in favour of the Japanese. They are pressing southward and westward; they have, according to the reports, inflicted heavier casualties than they have suffered; and they have occupied several key towns on their way to the capital. The Chinese have put up what opposition they could, and despite rumours of peace overtures from General Tang Yu-lin they may yet rally for a big fight. Whether they do or whether they do not, the Japanese will no doubt succeed in conquering Jehol. But the conquest of Jehol will not settle anything. It will be the prelude to a bitter and protracted resistance by China, and in all likelihood to a Japanese advance on Peking and Tientsin, which will force the League Powers and America into more strenuous action. It is plain that soft words are now a waste of breath; the Japanese have ceased even to thank Sir John Simon when he licks their boots. They are not disturbed by our arms embargo; for, as they themselves complacently observe, they have plenty to go on with, and it is the Chinese who will presently be short. There are other forms of pressure which they do fear, and it will be criminal folly on the part of the Powers to delay in applying them.

A Strange Peace Pact

Whilst fighting is in full swing in Asia and half the States of Europe are sitting on volcanoes, the Disarmament Conference at Geneva ploughs steadily through its agenda. We wish we could be sure that it is not ploughing the sand. On none of the particular points at issue—army "effectives," ships, guns, tanks, air forces—is there as yet any sign of real agreement. On a more general matter there is indeed some sort of agreement, but it has a significant and sinister limitation. It is proposed that the Kellogg Pact shall be strengthened by a declaration forbidding not merely resort to war but resort to force. This may have some value, though, if we remember aright, most of us are already solemnly pledged to "use the machinery of the League to prevent any resort to violence." But unfortunately the new pact is to be confined to Europe. Asiatic or African States may use force against each other, and, what is more important, may have force used against them by European Powers. On what grounds, and in whose interest, is this restriction made? Not on any grounds that can be morally justified, as it seems to us, and not in the interests of any non-European country—with the obvious exception of Japan. Several non-European countries have actually pressed for the pact to be made universal, but their demand has been rejected. What is sauce for the goose is not sauce for the gander.

Mr. Roosevelt's Cabinet

The banking crisis, the significance of which is discussed by our City Editor this week, is only a symptom of the deep *malaise* of American capitalism. As a team for tackling the situation, Mr. Roosevelt's Cabinet (which is not yet officially complete) is not impressive. Yet he has not made a conventional selection. At a time when the Democratic party is richer in political and administrative talent than at any time since the Civil War, the leaders have been almost completely ignored. The veterans of the Wilson regime, the still formidable "Al" Smith and his friends, have all been neglected. Senator Walsh, who is to be Attorney-General, is, it is true, an eminent member of the Party—and an old and rather arid man, Senator Hall, at the Department of State, is a rising man and one of the few Democrats who have clung to the low tariff principles of the Party. Senator Swanson is a Senator. The most striking appointment is that of Miss Frances Perkins as Secretary of Labour. It is gratifying that in this case Mr. Roosevelt has defied the opposition of that stereotyped political machine, the American Federation of Labour, and appointed a woman of rare experience and capacity. Mr. Woodin, who goes to the Treasury, is another surprise—a business magnate who bolted the Republican Party and supported "Al" Smith in 1928. Mr. Farley, the Postmaster-General, is a practical politician and, like Mr. Walsh, a Roman Catholic. Mr. Wallace, a "Progressive Republican," is to be Secretary of Agriculture—a post which his father filled in Harding's Cabinet. Catholics, business men, farmers, "radicals," all are provided for. The whole looks rather too much like a Ministry of All the Talents, and too little like a determined body of people whose common will is likely to be effective in a crisis.

The Significance of Rotherham

The Rotherham election is not a surprise but a confirmation. Everyone knew that the Labour candidate was certain to win by a very large majority. At the General Election of 1931 the "National" candidate scraped home by a few votes, whereas in 1929 the Labour candidate won by a majority even larger than Mr. Dobbie's this week, though not larger in relation to the votes cast. That a Conservative was able to win Rotherham in 1931 was a sign of the complete abnormality of the voting at the last General Election; for Rotherham is by nature a Labour seat. This week's result therefore indicates a swing-back of the constituency to its normal allegiance. It can at least be taken as an indication that, if a General Election were held now, there would be an enormous turnover of votes in the industrial areas. In order to win a national majority, however, the Labour Party would have to gain seats in the South, and in the residential and agricultural as well as in the purely industrial areas. Yet Mr. Dobbie's majority is a portent which enables us safely to discount the idea that the "National" Govern-

ment might prefer an early election to waiting for its electoral strength to ebb. That strength has ebbed already, and is ebbing farther every day, as the purely Tory character of the Government becomes more obvious.

Taxing the Co-ops

The Committee which has just reported in favour of taxing the Co-operative Societies was expected to report in that sense, and was appointed for no other purpose. What is significant is not that it recommends taxing the co-operators to the tune of an extra million or so a year, but that even its members have been driven to admit that there is no case at all for the taxation of Co-operative "dividends" on purchases. They have had to recognise that the "divi" is not a profit, but an overcharge subsequently returned to the purchaser, and to confine their proposals to the taxation of Co-operative reserves and interest payments. There is certainly a logical case for regarding the gains made from trade by the Co-ops with non-members as profits in the commercial sense, and even for treating Co-operative interest payments as taxable. But Co-operative reserves, unlike company reserves, do not swell share values, or redound to the profit of Co-operative investors, and it is doubtful whether they can fairly or usefully be subjected to taxation. In the case of interest even the present Committee has recognised that it would be grossly unfair to deduct the tax at source, in face of the fact that most of the recipients would have a claim to recover. In these circumstances the net yield of the tax is likely to be small, and this small yield will be purchased at the cost of discouraging a most desirable form of working-class saving. Another effect will be to drive co-operators farther into politics on the Labour side. The Government is, no doubt, fully aware of this, and would gladly drop the whole matter if it dared; but the small traders are out for blood—even if it is only a drop.

George Robey and Equity

It has often been said that the most efficient and ruthless Trade Unions in England are those of the lawyers and the doctors; and when professional men do combine to defend their common interests, they usually go far beyond the ordinary Trade Unions in attempting to establish their point by monopolistic means. It is therefore not surprising that the actors, having at length overcome the dissensions which brought down the old Actors' Association, are determined to enforce the "closed shop" as a means of making their bargaining power effective. They have the almost solid support of the profession; but in their way stands Mr. George Robey with a confused idea in his mind that joining the Actors' Equity means surrendering to Moscow. Now, Equity is not the least likely to be able to help Mr. Robey, who needs no help, to get a higher salary; but it is very likely indeed to be able, by means of its monopoly, to improve the position of the lower grades of the acting profession, to eliminate bogus managers, and to establish standard conditions in a chaotic and overcrowded trade. In doing this, it has the sympathy of most reputable managers, and, we hope, of the theatre-going public. Mr. Robey claims that he is more manager than actor, and that he has never in his life done anything he did not want to do. But to the public at least Mr. Robey is far more actor than manager, and we should have supposed he would be as keen as anyone else to help in improving the position of the bottom dog. The "Bolshevism" of Equity lives only in Mr. Robey's imagination. Equity is no more Bolshevik than the Bar Council or the B.M.A.

Whitehall or Slums?

It is proposed to spend over two million pounds on building new Government Offices, facing Whitehall and the Victoria Embankment, between Scotland Yard and the Banqueting Hall. This is a development of a pre-war project, which was again taken up when Mr. Lansbury was at the Office of Works. It would apparently entail the destruction of Richmond Terrace with its pleasant houses, trees and open spaces, though not, we hope, of Gwdyr House. It is unlucky that the areas in London picked for rebuilding are so rarely the festering slum districts, and so often pleasant places like Carlton House Terrace, the Adelphi, and Richmond Terrace. If new Government Offices must be built in this neighbourhood, there is surely a case for developing the South bank of the Thames, which must be done shortly even if the cost is heavy. The argument in favour of the present scheme is that it would give employment and at the same time pay for itself, because of the saving of rent now being paid for offices by the Government. If the State is regarded as having separate interests from the community, this is true. But there is at present a superfluity of office accommodation in the West End, and to add to it would not be a public benefit. The same expenditure on slum-clearance would look less well in the Budget, but unlike the present scheme it would be an addition to the real wealth of the country.

What the Public Wants

What is the Public? Sir John Reith speaking to the Thirty-Two Club rightly replied that there is no such beast, but rather innumerable publics wanting different things. And he was surely right in saying that the present organisation of the B.B.C. produces a more democratic result than a so-called democratic organisation would produce. But in saying that there was "no deliberate political bias" on the wireless, Sir John was begging the question. The problem in a conventional world is how to overcome the natural tendency to support the *status quo*. But in a lunch-hour speech one can scarcely expect a very frank discussion of such questions as the right of the Opposition to reply to Ministers and of the bias in news bulletins.

Housing Study Visits

The response to our suggestion last week for a Housing Study visit has been prompt and large. As more than the necessary number for the first visit have already applied we have arranged for this to take place on March 11th. A motor coach will leave Euston Road (outside Friends' House, near St. Pancras Church) at 11 a.m. The visit will begin with slum properties, clearance and rebuilding areas in the St. Pancras and Somers Town areas; it will proceed to Watling L.C.C. estate and thence to Welwyn Garden City, where a number of new experiments will be examined. Experts will accompany the party, and lunch and tea will be provided. The party is expected to arrive back by about 6 p.m.

A second Saturday visit is being arranged, probably for March 18th, and a mid-week trip is also under consideration for those who cannot get away on either Saturday.

SANCTIONS AGAINST JAPAN

SQUIRM as our statesmen may, the questions of sanctions against Japan cannot be avoided much longer. Since February 24th the Sino-Japanese conflict has become in law what it has long been in fact—a conflict between Japan and the other member States of the League. Every device of conciliation and inquiry has been exhausted, and Japan has at length been unanimously pronounced the aggressor. Article XV having failed, either China or Japan may at any moment compel us to recognise the existence of a state of war and bring Article XVI into operation.

The issue of sanctions which will then be raised was scarcely touched upon in Monday's debate in the House of Commons. By way of conciliating opinion, and to avoid the reproach of doing nothing, Sir John Simon announced that the British Government would not give licences for any export of arms to the Far East outside existing contracts. This unilateral action against both Powers has nothing to do with sanctions. It is an action which all Governments should at once take on the outbreak of hostilities in any part of the world, and we have repeatedly urged it upon the British Government during the last twelve months. To have adopted it in the early stages of the Japanese invasion would have been to remove the taint of bloodshed from this country, and if, as would have been highly probable, our example had induced other countries to follow suit, it might long ago have checked the extension of war in the East. To-day, with the aggression of Japan formally recognised, it is still worth doing as a gesture. But it is of little practical value, and Mr. Churchill made excellent nonsense of it when he said that as existing contracts are to be carried out, and as "we all hope that the actual fighting will not last very long, we have been able to adopt the correct attitude without serious loss to our own manufacturers," or throwing away our old valued friendship with Japan. Japan, the aggressor and invader, may well indeed be grateful to us; we have helped her to equip herself and have now decided not to equip China, whose "territorial integrity" we are pledged to protect. Japan has large stocks of munitions and very efficient arms factories of her own—the Nippon Steel Works is a subsidiary of Vickers-Armstrong—and, unless the world joins us in the embargo, she can still buy from Schneider-Creusot, from Skoda, from the United States armament ring, or from one of the numerous branches of Vickers-Armstrong in various parts of the world. China, poorer than Japan and without munitions factories of her own, will be more severely hit. The British action cannot, therefore, be defended at this stage on any grounds of justice; it is only acceptable because if this country acted alone in refusing arms to Japan and continued to send them to China there would be grave risk that Japan would seize them and that the real issue of the League and Japan would be side-tracked by a dangerous private dispute between Great Britain and Japan. Therefore, muddle-headed and ludicrously belated as it now is, the Government's decision is to be welcomed. But it has nothing on earth to do with sanctions.

The amazing thing about the debate in the House was that it revealed that Sir John Simon, even after the acceptance of the Lytton Report by the League and its rejection by Japan, is still willing to talk about Chinese provocation, both parties being in the wrong, and such like irrelevancies. The Report, accepted by the League and by this country as a member of the League, declares that "no questions of Chinese responsibility can arise for the development of events since September 18th, 1931," and it makes it clear that these events consist essentially in aggressive military operations by Japan against China in Chinese territory. Therefore, as a nation we are formally committed to the view that Japan is responsible for the present war, and Sir Austen Chamberlain, unlike Sir John Simon, honestly accepted the obligations and implications of our membership of the League. Sir Austen may not be a very whole-hogging internationalist, but he is a sincere man who does not play with England's word or pretend that black and white are really the same thing. It is, indeed, an almost incredible thing that eighteen months of continuous aggression by Japan, each act of aggression being defended on the ground that it was necessary to consolidate the last, have not shamed Sir John out of making excuses for Japan, have not cured some Conservative newspapers and members of Parliament of the habit of talking as if the League of Nations were an external busybody interfering with Japan's lawful occasions, instead of being, as it actually is, an executive body of which this country is a part. Once Article XVI is raised, we have a definite obligation in honour and in law to unite with the other member States of the League in using sanctions against Japan—a treaty obligation quite as indisputable as our obligation to defend the sanctity of Belgium in 1914. No country has ever had such an opportunity of making its case before world opinion as Japan. There *is* no case, except that the Japanese consider that their economic and political interests are well served by the violent rape of Chinese territory. Mr. Matsuoka's defence is to quote from the words of Christ, "Let him who is without sin amongst you throw the first stone." The end of the quotation seems to have slipped his memory: "Go and sin no more." And the difference between such sin in the past and to-day is that when England and France and other imperialistic Powers have made the bad government or rudeness of other countries the excuse for seizing foreign territory, they had not made solemn treaties not to do so, they had not signed the Kellogg Pact or the Covenant of the League of Nations, and there was no international machinery at Geneva for the settlement of grievances. Those who support Japan to-day are in effect saying that they welcome the conquest of China by Japan because it is a sign that the old law still prevails, that those who are strong must always prey upon the weak. Those who are outspoken also add on occasions that they rather welcome the prospect of a Russo-Japanese war in the Far East.

In opposition to these advocates of anarchy there are a few Covenanters who would like to apply immediately and without modification all the sanctions laid down in Article XVI, including an economic blockade of Japan. They are right in law, but only justified in practice provided that they have thought through to the possible consequences. It is possible that Japan, dominated as she is by a group of militarists so violent that Mr. Matsuoka is said to fear assassination on his return to Japan, would regard the application of economic sanctions as an excuse for running amok, for seizing Singapore and

possibly bombing Hong Kong. In our view the question whether we are to have an international order or to accept its defeat at the hands of Japanese militarism is of such paramount importance—quite apart from the terrific practical dangers of allowing Japan to do what she likes in Asia—that the risks of abiding by the obligations we have jointly undertaken with other Powers are far less than the risks of throwing our obligations to the winds and returning to the old conditions of international anarchy. Therefore we are prepared to consider as realistically as possible the practical effects of any sanction proposed, only asking whether or not it is likely in this case to be effective and whether its value in coercing Japan is likely to be commensurate with the risk and damage it involves. What we are not for a moment prepared to do—and what we hope every internationally minded person will unite in preventing—is to permit Sir John Simon to befog the issue from the start by a pretence that Japan is not really the aggressor or on a different footing from China, and that we are not therefore bound to attempt such sanctions against Japan as may be effectively agreed upon by the member States of the League. The latest excuse for avoiding the question of sanctions is that the United States, when it comes to it, may not be prepared to follow the clear lead given by Mr. Stimson. To which the answer is that we do not know what the United States will do until we try; Senator Borah's repudiation of an arms embargo on both parties is no indication that there will not be an overwhelming demand in the United States for sanctions against Japan provided the member States of the League, whose obligation is much clearer than that of the United States, at once get down to considering the one question before them—what can be done to stop Japan?

The first practical step is to distinguish between an embargo and a blockade. A blockade of Japan would be a terrible, and we believe an unnecesssary, step. Economic and diplomatic pressure must be applied cumulatively and progressively; the Committee set up by the League to concert action against Japan should already be considering the details of its application. America, which has already associated itself with the report condemning Japan as an aggressor, is expected to join the Committee, now that Mr. Roosevelt has assumed office. The Committee have a variety of proposals to consider, the practicability of joint embargoes on arms, on raw materials—oil, for instance, is a far more important matter than munitions from the point of view of the Japanese militarist—and on foreign loans. An embargo on all foreign loans in London, New York and Paris would make Japan's military operations increasingly difficult, and incidentally prove an effective means of preventing her from making further purchases of arms from the Western Powers. There will no doubt be difficulties, though if Great Britain, France and the United States are in earnest, not, we believe, insuperable difficulties in applying such sanctions. The main thing is that the Committee should get to work, that Japan should see that the League and the United States mean business, and that there should be an unequivocal acceptance everywhere of the fact that Japan is the aggressor, that her conquests will not be recognised, and that her aggression will be opposed by every effective means in our power. We disagree with Mr. Churchill in thinking that this affair of Japan will soon be over; there is a long struggle ahead, not only in China but in the West, between the forces of anarchy as represented by Japan and those of internationalism as represented by the League. The most important thing is that we should step off with the right foot, recognising, in spite of Sir John Simon, where our interests and obligations lie, and, unlike him, refusing to excuse the gangsters of the East.

SOME NOTES ON THE HOUSE OF LORDS

IT is the underlying assumption of most official Conservative proposals for the reform of the House of Lords that in any new assembly the present peerage should elect 150 of their members as representatives of their order. It has seemed to us worth while to analyse the political habits of the peerage, as evidenced by the part its members play in the proceedings of the House, in order to test the volume of their interest in politics. For in a reconstituted chamber, of which the membership is usually put at 300, it is clear that the peers elected by their order would be the dominating element in the House.

We have taken the House of Lords as on December 31st, 1931, when its effective membership was 729, thirty peers being minors who had not then taken their seats. We have analysed the debates and the division lists from January 1st, 1919, to December 31st, 1931, inclusive (Vols. 33–83 of the Lords' Hansard, Fifth Series). To understand the tables which follow, we should note that (*a*) to speak twice is taken by us to mean a speech made on two separate meetings of the House; (*b*) we have made no distinction between debates or divisions in Committee or in the proceedings of the House as a whole; (*c*) we have regarded a peerage as an institution, so that the present title-holder is credited with speaking at a debate or with attendance at a division where this was performed by his predecessor of the same title.

Table I gives the average attendance at the House in the divisions for the years 1919–1931:

TABLE I

Year.	No. of Peers in Division.	Year.	No. of Peers in Division.
1919	69	1926	93
1920	100	1927	96
1921	82	1928	68
1922	86	1929	64
1923	83	1930	98
1924	80	1931	85
1925	73		

The average for the whole period is 83. The Conservative proposal of 150 peers to be elected by their order to sit in the new House would, therefore, give them a representation about 80 per cent. greater than their average attendance in the post-war period.

Table II gives the divisions since 1919 in our period which have aroused sufficient interest to bring more than 100 peers to vote. In the whole period there have been 439 divisions.

TABLE II

No. of Divisions of over 100, 1919–31	119
No. of Divisions of over 200, 1919–31	13

Divisions over 100 are, therefore, 27 per cent., those of over 200 2.9 per cent. of the total number of divisions. There are 111 peers who did not, in our period, take part in any division.

Table III gives the contribution made by peers to the debates as distinct from the divisions in the House of Lords.

TABLE III

Peers who have spoken at least once, 1919–31	358
Peers who have spoken at least twice, 1919–31	311
Peers who have spoken three or more times, 1919–31	277
Peers who have spoken ten or more times, 1919–31	98

From this it will be observed that 371 peers have never spoken, in our period, in the debates; and that less than two-thirds of the number upon whom the Conservative proposal

would confer membership have made an annual speech during those years.

We have thought it of value, also, to discover what interests find their representation in the House of Lords during our period in order to see whether its composition is markedly different from that of the House of Commons. Table IV, accordingly, takes the representation of public companies and interests in both Houses in the Parliament of 1924—a Parliament we have selected as fairly representative, on the popular side, of the post-war period.

TABLE IV

Type of Interest.	No. of Directors in Lords.	No. of Directors in Commons.
Amusements (Theatres, Cinemas, etc.)	12	7
Banks	67	21
Brewers and Distillers	12	16
Building	1	11
Chemicals	15	17
Coal, Iron and Steel	27	35
Distribution	14	24
Engineering and Shipbuilding	49	52
Finance and Investment	74	53
Food	7	19
Gas, Water, Electricity	13	20
Hotels and Catering	8	6
Insurance	112	42
Landowners	246	29
Mining (excluding coal)	29	8
Newspapers	6	17
Petroleum	15	16
Printing and Paper	6	12
Railways	64	24
Shipping	26	31
Tea, Coffee, Rubber	13	9
Telegraph	8	—
Textiles	15	31
Total interests represented	738	500

It will be seen from this that the House of Lords represents economic interests with an intensity even greater than that of the House of Commons. It does not appear that its representatives in a new second chamber would be likely to bring into a new second chamber any new or different outlook not available to it in other ways.

We have, lastly, tabulated the number of peers who have held Government office in each of the successive ministries from 1919 to 1931 :—

TABLE V

Ministry.	No. of Peers in Cabinet.	No. of Peers in other offices (including Household).
Lloyd George	3	19
Bonar Law	7	17
Baldwin	8	18
MacDonald	5	11
Baldwin	6	13
MacDonald	4	9
MacDonald (October, 1931)	4	16

It is worth noting, also, that of the nineteen peers who have held Cabinet office, fourteen have previously sat in the House of Commons.

We conclude that to give the peers 150 representatives in the reconstructed House would

(1) Give them 80 per cent. more representation than their effective attendance in the period 1919–31.

(2) Give them also 30 per cent. more representation than the interest they display so far as making an annual speech is a measure of interest.

(3) Would give a share in electing representatives to 111 members of the Lords who have never voted, and to 371 peers who have never spoken in the debates.

(4) Would give half the representation in the proposed House to men whose interests are the same as those now represented, though in a less intense degree, in the House of Commons.

J. CRIGHTON
H. J. LASKI

A LONDON DIARY

I GATHER that there is some doubt whether Maxim Gorky, Barbusse and other distinguished persons announced will really turn up for the Anti-war Congress in Bermondsey this week-end. But, what is really much more important, there are to be nearly 1,000 delegates, representing very large bodies of British Trade Unionists. In a few cases the delegates represent the national Trade Unions themselves. The transport and electrical workers will be there in special force, and I gather that we are to have some very interesting inside information about the gentle art of munition making from workers in munition factories. Particulars about armament firms are singularly hard to obtain in the House of Commons. Sir John Simon may gather some useful material for answering supplementary questions on the question of the embargo.

* * *

Is it Joan, in Bernard Shaw's play, who replies, when she is told she is mad, "Well, we need some mad people; look where the sane ones have landed us." Colonel Tweed, who has produced his political novel, *Rinehard* (Barker, 7*s.* 6*d.*), just at the psychological moment when Mr. Roosevelt arrives to take charge, seems to have had the same idea as St. Joan. His newly elected President, Rinehard, is an ordinary, pleasant "progressive" politician: he has an accident which drives him into doing all sorts of mad or divinely inspired things like employing the unemployed, inflating the currency, and destroying at one and the same time gangsters and the American Constitution. By an excellent turn of irony he gets another bump on the head on the eve of his re-election, becomes sane again and is horrified at the wicked irregularities of his own conduct. Colonel Tweed, who is in a position to know all about Liberal politics in England, makes a scarcely disguised Mr. Lloyd George run England while Rinehard is running the United States. He seems to imply that we do not need a madman: Mr. Lloyd George he thinks adequate to our comparatively easy task.

* * *

The debate organised by the National Union of Journalists between Sir Oswald Mosley and Mr. James Maxton, under the chairmanship of Mr. Lloyd George, was in every way a prodigious success. Unluckily the chairman made only a short introductory speech. Sir Oswald is a very able and fluent orator. He never hesitates, his language is carefully chosen, and his brain evidently works at high speed. He was most effective in his gibes at the present Government, but his tendency to sneer soon becomes a handicap, and he did not succeed in appealing either to the head or the heart of his audience. The ideology of Fascism is feeble; it is the product both in Italy and Germany of a marriage between disappointed nationalism and terror of Communism. But at present neither Jingoism nor anti-Communism makes much appeal to an English audience; and Sir Oswald, whose favourite word is "realism," ought to be "realistic" enough to know this. His programme promised all the pains of revolution without its rewards, the loss of individual liberty without either the disappearance of class or international amity. (For who could believe in his peroration about the peace of a completely Fascist world?) Mr. Maxton did not attempt to state the intellectual case either for Socialism or against Fascism. His debating points were brilliant, though he is slower in speech than his opponent. Sir Oswald had threatened to use machine-guns if necessary, and it was delicious to listen to the inflections in Mr. Maxton's voice in replying to the "gangster" who wanted to "bump off" his adversaries. (Humour on this subject would have been impossible if the debate had been this week-end with the tragedy of Germany hanging over us all). Mr. Maxton has the great orator's gift of going straight to his hearers' hearts, of warning them, of making them feel good. Here, one felt, was entire sincerity, an infectious and burning love of humanity. It was not mere partisanship which prevented my feeling any equivalent emotion when listening

to Sir Oswald. I am sure he is equally sincere, but apart from the merits of his case he was not comparable with Mr. Maxton as an orator. I am told he is at his best only when addressing his own supporters, whereas Mr. Maxton obviously delighted almost every one present. I have never heard so fine a political speech of the emotional sort. When the meeting was over the Fascists present in grey and black shirts raised a loud cheer in answer to the official Fascist cry of "Hail Mosley!"

* * *

I am not surprised that the Exhibition of works by recently deceased Academicians has attracted so few visitors to Burlington House compared with the Italian and French Exhibitions. But I am flabbergasted that Professor Constable, the Head of the Courtauld Institute, should write to the *Times* suggesting that the Exhibition has failed because we are readier to acclaim the merits of foreign art than those of our native school. Is it, I wonder, the Freemasons, the Jews, or the Bolsheviks in our midst, who make the public more interested in Botticelli, Raphael, Titian, Poussin, Chardin and Cézanne than in Orpen, Dicksee, Tuke, Sims, Wylie and La Thangue? Professor Constable goes on to say that the works in the Exhibition are proof of the high level of modern British art. It is true that the work of the R.A.s is at least as good as that of those of their French contemporaries who exhibit at the Salon, but the best modern painters, with one or two exceptions, never exhibit either at the Salon or Burlington House. "Not here, O Apollo . . ." By a peculiar irony Professor Constable dates his letter from an Institute decorated by the good taste of its founder with the masterpieces of French unacademic painting, including works which helped to make the French Exhibition so vastly more successful than the present show. In an age without standards one of the functions of a University, and surely *a fortiori* of the Courtauld Institute, is to assert the superiority of the good irrespective of time and place. *Quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*

* * *

The pages of the *Tablet* have recently been enlivened by a most entertaining controversy, which appears to have ended with a suddenness that suggests the interference of the ecclesiastical authorities. Mr. Evelyn Waugh was received into the Catholic Church, and a year or so later published his novel *Black Mischief*. the *Tablet* then stated that "this novel would be a disgrace to anybody professing the Catholic name," and with a delicacy which it has since abandoned refused even to print its title. It further referred to "outrageous lapses in those who are, or who are supposed to be, our co-religionists," whereupon a dozen prominent Catholics, including three Jesuits, wrote a letter of protest. The Editor of the *Tablet* retorted with over three columns of attack upon Mr. Waugh and his supporters. I would not presume to give any opinion on the rights of the matter, beyond saying that *Black Mischief* is not immoral, but is, by Victorian standards, immodest. Mr. Waugh describes licentiousness in order to ridicule it, and the *Tablet* retorts that his book is coarse and disgusting. There has always been a Puritanical party in the Church of Rome, and, oddly enough, as the Church has become less powerful in the world it has become increasingly Puritanical. Apart from the indiscreet amusement afforded to heretics and infidels, the chief interest of the incident is the comment it affords on the jolly school of modern Catholics who hold up the Church to our admiration as the strongest enemy of Puritanism.

* * *

Apropos my remarks about the squeamishness of the London press in reporting Mr. Justice McCardie's remarks about abortion and the sterilisation of the unfit several correspondents have written to tell me that provincial papers were ahead of London in this respect. The *Yorkshire Post* and *Nottingham Evening News*, for example, both gave sensible reports. In London, I think, the only paper not afraid to mention abortion was the *Morning Post*.

Lady Houston has sent the following message to the Japanese Ambassador in London: "Friendliest greetings. Japan has nothing to fear. Every just man and woman in Britain is with her because she is in the right. The importance of the League of Nations has never existed except in its own imagination."—Daily paper.

* * *

As there are no boxes at Sadler's Wells a special throne was fitted up, probably from the property room, in the middle of the aisle, so that the Queen was actually sitting among the audience in the stalls. It is greatly to the honour of the audience that they behaved quite beautifully, and exactly as though the Queen were not there!—Daily paper.

CRITIC

OVERCROWDING AND POVERTY: EAST LONDON AND MERSEYSIDE

[Mr. Sprague's contribution to our Housing Series is unavoidably held over till next week. The following article by Mr. C. T. Saunders of the Liverpool Survey, gives amongst other points of comparison an instructive example of the differences and resemblances involved in the housing problem in two overcrowded parts of England.—ED., N. S. & N.]

THE publication of the third volume of the New Survey of London Life and Labour, which contains an account of an intensive house-to-house investigation in East London, has made possible an instructive comparison between its results and those obtained by the other large-scale Social Survey at present proceeding—that in the Merseyside area. The first volume of the Merseyside Social Survey, conducted by Liverpool University, is due later this year; but some of its findings have already been published and provide material for this article. The figures quoted refer occasionally to Liverpool only, but, as Liverpool contains two-thirds of the population in the entire area, they may be regarded as closely representative of the whole.

Merseyside, like London, is a vast conurbation whose remorseless tentacles have been steadily grasping more and more of the surrounding countryside. It comprises four county boroughs—Liverpool, Bootle, Birkenhead and Wallasey—for, although socially and industrially the area is almost a single city, each of the constituent local authorities jealously clings to its own individuality and no attempt has yet been made to emulate London's example in bringing together the several boroughs under some form of federal authority. After London, the port of Liverpool is the greatest in the country, but while London is a port and many other things besides, the economic character of Merseyside is dominated by its dependence on foreign trade.

In the Merseyside Survey substantially the same methods have been employed as in London. In both a sample house-to-house inquiry was made among the working class population and the results apply principally to the years 1929 and early 1930—a period which represents normal post-war conditions and not those of the slump. The questions asked and the meanings attached to the principal terms used were so framed as to yield comparable figures and the results were assessed by similar standards. The working class population of East London was found to be 78 per cent. of the total as compared with 70 per cent. on Merseyside. The fact that East London has a less diversified population does not, however, affect the principal conclusions, since they relate only to the working class sections of both areas. The average working class household is rather smaller in East London (3.7 persons) than on Merseyside (4.2 persons). The larger family on Merseyside is probably due to the considerable Irish element, with an exceptionally high birth-rate, in the population.

Both Surveys have dealt in some detail with housing, and the results reveal some striking contrasts and some interesting parallels. In East London, it appears, the great majority of working class households share houses. Less than one family in three has a whole house to itself. The remainder are divided into three groups—those who rent a whole house and

sub-let a section of it, the sub-tenants of these principal tenants, and those who live in houses which have been built or adapted for the use of more than one family. Of these three groups, the last is the largest. On Merseyside, on the other hand, three families in four have whole houses to themselves; of the remainder, about 10 per cent. sub-let to others, while nearly all the rest are the sub-tenants of the 10 per cent. As these figures suggest, overcrowding is a far more prominent feature of East London than of Merseyside. The London Survey used a standard of overcrowding which relates bedroom accommodation to the age and sex of members of the household, and found that 16 per cent. of the households investigated had inadequate accommodation. The Merseyside Survey adopted a slightly more severe test, and found that 11 per cent. of the households fell below the standard. An even more striking indication of the gravity of the housing position in both areas is the fact that in East London one in three, and on Merseyside one in four, of the children under fourteen are living in overcrowded conditions. A cruder test afforded by the Census of 1931 shows that, while the average Londoner has rather less than one room to himself, the average citizen of Liverpool has just over one room. Though the working class population of East London seems to be worse housed than that of Merseyside, rents in the former are considerably higher. The average rents for all kinds of dwellings in East London is 10s. 6d., in Liverpool 9s. 5d. It is true that prices and incomes are also higher in London; but if the average rent is calculated as a percentage of income we find that the East London family spends 15.6 per cent. of its weekly income on rent and the Merseyside family 14.6 per cent.

One exceptionally important factor in the housing problem is probably much the same in both areas. There is an apparent paradox in the continued existence of overcrowded slums side by side with the increasing dispersion of the population outside the old limits of the urban areas. The fascinating maps provided by the London Survey show, however, that overcrowding and unhealthy slum areas are concentrated near the docks, warehouses and railway stations, where pools of casual and unskilled labour are required to satisfy the constantly fluctuating demands of trade. Much the same is true of Merseyside, where almost all the worst areas are within easy reach of the docks. So long as the dock worker must attend twice a day at the "stands" to seek employment or, more often now, to satisfy the Unemployment Insurance regulations, it is idle to suggest that he should live in an L.C.C. house at Becontree, if a Londoner, or in a Corporation house at Norris Green, if he belongs to Liverpool. The housing problem is unlikely to be solved, either in London or on Merseyside, until houses, probably in the form of large blocks of flats, are provided in the central areas or until a considerable measure of decasualisation of dock and other labour takes place.

The two Surveys have studied not only housing and overcrowding but also incomes and poverty on similar lines. The average (median) weekly income, excluding Public Assistance, of the working class families sampled in East London was about 67s. This figure represents the income during the week of investigation and thus takes into account temporary reductions due to unemployment, short time, and illness. The corresponding figure for Liverpool families was 64s. 3d. Average family income is thus only about 4 per cent. higher in London. To measure the extent of poverty, however, money incomes must be related to some standard of needs. The family whose income is insufficient to meet these needs may be described as in "poverty." A standard of minimum needs, taking into account only the necessaries of life, has been employed by both Surveys, allowance being made for variations in prices. In East London the cost of these essential commodities, excluding rent, for the average family of 3.7 persons, is 28s. 1d. For the same family on Merseyside the cost would be 25s. 4d. The average Merseyside family contains, however, not 3.7 but 4.2 persons; for a family thus constituted, the Poverty Line, at Merseyside prices, is 26s. 10d. The average (median) East London family has an income about 70 per cent. above the Poverty Line; the median Merseyside family is about 100 per cent. above this standard. Although, therefore, the average family in East London seems to be worse off than the corresponding family on Merseyside, there is no doubt that urgent poverty is more conspicuous in the latter area. For while in East London 11 per cent. of the sampled population fell below the Poverty Line, on Merseyside the proportion was 16 per cent. (By an odd coincidence, the percentage in poverty on Merseyside is the same as the percentage overcrowded in London, and vice versa.) Like overcrowding, poverty bears much more hardly on children than on adults. In East London 16 per cent., and on Merseyside 23 per cent., of the children under fourteen were living in poverty.

The explanation of the difference in poverty between the two areas is not obscure. Both Social Surveys have brought out with some emphasis the conclusion that poverty is less often the result of low wages (as in Charles Booth's day) than of unemployment. Now while in June, 1929, the central period of the London Survey, the unemployed in the London Survey area were 4.8 per cent. of the insured, in the same month 16.5 per cent. of the insured population of Merseyside were out of work. Both areas were sampled before the slump had begun to be seriously felt, but even to-day there is as wide a gap between unemployment in London (12.6 per cent. in December, 1932) and on Merseyside (30.2 per cent. in the same month). So while the Merseyside family whose earners are at work seems to be substantially better off than its East London counterpart, the chances of unemployment, with all its disastrous effects on the family economy, are two or three times as great on Merseyside. London, though a port, has developed a diversity of manufacturing industries, mostly catering for the almost unreduced purchasing power of the home market. Though the streets there are not precisely paved with gold, yet those who walk them look on the whole more prosperous than the drab and shabby crowds who daily trudge from home or casual labour stand to the Merseyside Employment Exchanges. Indeed, visitors from America have been heard to remark that their first impression of Liverpool is that the only healthy looking people on the streets are the policemen.

On Merseyside, the business of the port is the principal activity in the area; more than half the insured population, and a greater proportion of the unemployed, are normally engaged in shipping, shipbuilding, transport, or distribution. The manufacturing industries, though they produce a surprising variety of commodities, are mostly "port industries," located where they are either because they depend on heavy and imported raw materials or because they serve shipping or shipbuilding. It is easy to see that the great decline in foreign trade and in shipping is chiefly responsible for the depression which has brooded over Merseyside for a decade. Considerable efforts have been made to attract new factories to the area by advertisement, but the superficial attractions of proximity to the markets of the south have more than counterbalanced the most skilful propaganda. The truth seems to be that, while London is relatively a prosperous area, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the only chances of revival on Merseyside lie either in a substantial increase in foreign trade or, alternatively, in the adoption by the Government of a deliberate policy of concentrating new industrial development in areas where supplies of unemployed labour, as well as transport and power facilities, already exist.

C. T. SAUNDERS

SPRING BOOKS SUPPLEMENT

this year will be published with the issue of March 18th

THE PLEASURES OF ABSTINENCE

I CANNOT help feeling envious of those whose religious convictions give them a reason for fasting during Lent. To escape even for a few weeks from the tyranny of what are called the good things of life—is not this to taste the morning air of freedom? The good things of life are well enough in their way, but the saints and the puritans were right in warning us that fools like ourselves were in some danger of becoming slaves to them. It seems to me a terrible thing that thousands of rational beings should be slaves even to so petty a pleasure as early morning tea. Yet many people, if they are not given a cup of tea on waking, begin the day with a greater sense of calamity than they would feel if, on opening the newspaper, they found that the continent of Australia had been submerged under the ocean. The habit of taking afternoon tea produces the same servitude. I have seen a nurse, when she was kept waiting ten minutes longer than usual for tea, wearing as harried a look as if she were threatened with starvation in a beleaguered town. "I'm dying for a cup of tea," she would cry on such occasions, and she looked as if she meant it. Most of the things we eat and drink become equally indispensable to our happiness. There are men who honestly believe that they would rather be dead than live without the delight of eating the flesh of animals. They will undergo a dangerous operation without flinching, but they cannot bear the thought of lifelong separation from roast beef. As for tobacco, half of us are under the childish illusion that our happiness and peace of mind are bound up with it. Even when the frame of civilisation is shaking, we forget all about the frame of civilisation if we find that we have left ourselves without cigarettes. As for wine, beer and spirits, they (or some of them) have dominated the thoughts of men since the days of Noah. I have known highly intellectual men who looked on a teetotaller as a being almost outside the communion of humanity, a kind of harmless leper. They could understand a man being bored by Shakespeare or being unable to master the multiplication table, but the man who deliberately drank water with his meals was beyond their comprehension or sympathy.

I will not deny that tea, beef, tobacco, wine, beer and spirits have made a sensible addition to the happiness of mankind. They are all aids to cheerfulness, and induce in us a much-needed temporary feeling that all's right with the world. They even enable us to tolerate each other as we might not be able to do if we were all catharists living on bread and water. Consider the different attitudes of the beer-drinker and the teetotaller when they enter the bar of a public house. The teetotaller sees around him a collection of the chosen bores of the earth indulging in inane and pointless conversation beneath the intellectual level of a schoolchild. He observes, without sympathy, full-grown men raising glasses of foul-smelling fluid to their lips and saying "Cheerio!" "Well, here's luck," and "All the best," and monotonously going through the same ceremony over and over again. He finds the atmosphere thick and malodorous, and tells himself that he would rather be in gaol than doomed for long to remain in such company and such surroundings. See the beer drinker enter, however. How his face lights up as he sees a friend! How expressive of happiness are their brief greetings! "Hilloa, Harry!" "Hilloa, Billie!" "What's yours?" "No, have this with me." "Well, I think I'll have a nice glass of bitter." "Miss, Miss! two nice glasses of bitter, please." Here is the centre of the world, steeped in sunshine. The bar is for them no sordid place, but is as bright as a ball-room, and the rows of bottles reflected in the mirror have an enchanting gleam. There are, I suppose, few things less attractive to an impartial eye than the inside of an urban public-house; but tolerance born of beer overlooks its shortcomings, and in quest of the mood of tolerance men return to it again and again.

Cooked meats, I am sure, serve the same purpose as wine, beer, and spirits in converting naturally intolerant human beings to tolerance. There are men who prefer a bad dinner with good company to a good dinner with bad company; but to the normal pleasure-loving man, when the dinner is good, there can be no such thing as bad company. A woman who would be intolerable over a dish of herbs becomes a lively and delightful neighbour as course follows course of gluttonous pleasure. The very sight of a profusion of food fills the heart with benevolent thoughts. I have frequently liked a man during a meal whom I disliked before the meal, and disliked again when the meal was over. Such charity undoubtedly is good for the soul. No man looks entirely hateful when one is eating lobster. There are ways of cooking chicken that make enmity and malice as though they were not. A few muscats and a glass of port convert the voice of a bore into something as soothing as a rivulet's murmur. There are sound moral reasons for dining well.

Tea and tobacco can also be praised as begetters of benignity. Comic writers have often pictured afternoon tea as a mere occasion for malicious gossip. But the virtue of tea is that it makes even women who specialise in malicious gossip endurable. To say spiteful things about one's friends seems quite friendly somehow when everybody is drinking tea. There are things that no good woman would say about her friends at eleven o'clock in the morning, but which seem the natural things to say amid good-humoured laughter at five in the afternoon. It is tea that makes the difference. I am convinced that over a cup of tea a good woman even likes the people she libels.

As for tobacco, it has the great merit of making both solitude tolerable and company tolerable. Give a man a pipe or a cigarette and you give him an occupation which prevents him from noticing that he is lonely and from observing his fellow-creatures over-critically. Smoking puts him into an armchair mood. He at once relaxes and expands. Speeches at banquets would have been abolished long ago if it had not been for cigars. Cigar-smokers, however, do not notice when they are being bored. The self-indulgent man is frequently the most indulgent to others.

Divine a thing though the spirit of tolerance is, however, it seems to me that we can pay too dearly for it. We ought to think of ourselves as well as of others, and I do not see why we should ruin our constitutions by eating, drinking and smoking merely because just the art of being kind is all this sad world needs. If pre-breakfast tea is bad for me, why should I swallow the stuff because it happens to put me in a good temper? Better to be a bad-tempered man and free from niggling slavery. Why, again, should I smoke countless cigarettes in order to keep in a good humour with my fellow-creatures? Let my fellow-creatures improve themselves to such a point that even a non-smoker will be able to look on them with a kindly eye. Further, I do not see why I should drug myself with cooked meats for the purpose of blinding myself to the faults of my neighbours.

The man who cannot be good company at a vegetarian table should not be humoured in this fashion. If the world has advanced slowly, and is in such a state at the present day that it is impossible to say whether it is going backwards or forwards, may not this be due to the fact that most of us have been made easy-goingly complacent by tea, tobacco, meat and strong liquor?

Apart from this I hold that abstinence has its own pleasures, and that the man who has not enjoyed these has only half-lived. To do without a thing, and to discover that one is as happy as one was before, gives one a sense of the real values of life. I confess I never feel more cheerful than on the occasions on which I am a non-smoker and a teetotaller. In normal times I live on the assumption that life without tobacco and whisky would be a vale of tears. Let me abstain from them for a few days, however, and I discover to my surprise that the day is as full as ever and that existence on our planet would be endurable even if men drank nothing but water, and if the tobacco-plant were extirpated. I do not yet know what makes

life really worth living, but I suspect that it is not merely whisky and tobacco. We can learn only by the experiment of giving things up. By a process of elimination, if we live long enough, we may discover the secret. The experience of not smoking may be richer than the experience of smoking, and it is possible that we live more fully by cutting down our needs than by satisfying them. For myself, I should like to be able to live two lives at the same time—a life of self-indulgence and a life of self-denial—and to compare the pleasures they afforded at the end of a dozen years. I should like to be rather like King Charles II and rather like Mr. Gandhi simultaneously. Especially, during Lent, I should like to be like Mr. Gandhi, who can be happy without any of the things that make me happy. He has made a declaration of independence that I should, with one lobe of my brain, like to make. He is not, like me, at the mercy of money, tobacco, food, whisky, taxis, and all the petty despots of common life. If ever I am reincarnated, I have a mind to imitate him. Meanwhile, I must be content to gaze across a gulf at him and all Lenten fasters with admiration and envy. Y. Y.

AN EYE TO ESSENTIALS

As . . . all existing contracts . . . are to be carried out, and as we all hope that the actual fighting will not last very long, I think we have been able to adopt the correct attitude without serious loss to our own manufacturers.—Mr. WINSTON CHURCHILL.

How true to form! Our Winston, once again,
Lifts the whole issue to a higher plane.
'Tis not for him to join the easy sneer
At nations, paralysed by greed or fear,
Content to watch with impotent regret
The war they all condemned wax fiercer yet;
To furnish (with regret) the means to fight,
And aid aggression in their own despite.
'Tis not for him to mourn that, at the best,
Our hands are somewhat cleaner than the rest.
Austen may grieve and Amery may jeer,
For *him* one vital truth stands crystal clear:
The fight's unequal, will be short no doubt,
And running contracts must be carried out—
Hence British traders, with no sense of guilt,
May share the profit of the blood that's spilt;
So, while we save our honour and our dross
God may be served, and Mammon feel no loss.

MACFLECKNOE

Correspondence

THE HOUSING PROGRAMME

SIR,—I read with great interest Dr. Robson's letter on the proposed Housing Corporation, and should like to offer some further observations.

One looks in vain for any adequate reason for the proposal to set up a new organisation to deal with the housing shortage. The only reasons stated are (1) that the local authorities have failed to satisfy the housing shortage, and (2) that it is not desirable that the tenants of municipal houses should be able, because they are also electors, to bring pressure to bear upon their elected representatives. As to reason (1), no evidence is produced to show how this new organisation is going to be completely successful where the local authorities have been only partially successful; and as to (2), no evidence is put forward to show that any serious evil of the nature suggested has arisen.

The reasons against the formation of the proposed new organisation are surely overwhelming. Local authorities have been building houses since the war. These houses are admitted to be generally well planned, both in the unit and in the mass. The local authorities have succeeded in bringing down prices appreciably, in raising the standard of workmanship and materials, and in reducing rents. These achievements bespeak some degree of efficiency. Why then scrap all their housing organisations when they have just got fairly into stride? These organisations are not simply concerns that can be called up or dispensed with at will. They include sub-departments for dealing with the purchase of land, for surveying, architectural design, the arranging and squaring up of contracts for roads, sewers and building, letting offices, and maintenance and repairs organisations, and they have to work in close contact with the Health, Town Planning and other organisations. Is the proposed National Housing Corporation going to take over these existing organisations in the 400 odd boroughs, county boroughs, and other local areas? Or is it going to start afresh and build up entirely new departments? If the former, what new qualifications or powers are going to emerge from the change of authority, and why? And if the latter, how long will it take to get into working order? In either case, how will the new organisation build houses better, or cheaper, or faster, or let them at lower rents than the local authorities are now doing? And what is to happen to the people who require houses in the interval? The sequence of marriages and births will neither abate nor stand still.

What is to happen to the existing housing estates, and the letting and maintenance organisations connected with them, which must continue to function? These must remain under the local authorities, as it is well nigh impossible for them to be transferred. There will then be in the area of each local authority two separate organisations for letting and maintaining houses. Is this efficiency or economy?

Why have the local authorities failed to reach a complete solution of the housing shortage? Mainly because the housing problem is at bottom a poverty problem, and while widespread poverty exists there cannot be a complete solution of the housing problem. Subsidies will help very powerfully. Without them the task is impossible. As Sir Ernest Simon insists, there is a large section of the people who cannot possibly pay the economic rent of the most modest, decent house that can be built.

The comparison made with the Electricity Board is wholly erroneous. The Electricity Board is a wholesale organisation only. It does not come into contact with the thousands of people who require electricity. The proposed Housing Corporation, if it is to provide houses, will require to get into contact with the millions of people requiring them.

There is, in truth, no need for any new organisation to provide houses. The local authorities are quite able to cope with the task if they are given the chance, and given help, not hindrance, by, among others, the central government. If cities like Birmingham and Liverpool can, with their own housing organisations, build 6,000 houses in one year, as has been done, the whole of the local authorities in the country on a *pro rata* basis could construct sufficient houses to provide for the natural increase of the population and to meet the whole of the present shortage within a period of ten years. A further period of ten years would suffice to replace the whole of the slums. Why not let the local authorities get on with the job, give subsidies where subsidies are proved necessary, and, if political pressure develops where it should not, it can surely be dealt with. There may be a case for providing some co-ordinating planning organisation, in view of the overflowing of the large cities beyond their boundaries and the increasing mobility of industry, but does such provision necessitate an earthquake among the existing housing organisations?

Incidentally, what are we likely to get from private enterprise towards the solution of the housing problem? I have just seen plans of new houses built and building by private enterprise in one locality. The area of each house is 554 sq. ft., which is well under the minimum allowed under the Housing Acts. It consists of "two up and two down." It looks as if it were built for pygmies. If a fire were lighted in the larger bedroom it would set the bed alight. The only place to keep food in is an unventilated space below the stairs. The w.c. enters directly from the kitchen, which is only 7½ft. by 8½ft., with three doors opening into it. The exterior is a typical "mean streets" composition, and the author of the plans is apparently a member of the premier architectural organisation. The gross rent for this packing-case dwelling is 18*s.* per week! ARCHITECT

SIR,—Sir Ernest Simon's letter in your issue of the 11th shows that there are really two problems to be faced in getting rid of the slums—how to provide sufficient new houses at low rents, and how to ensure that they are occupied by the people for whom they are intended. We may perhaps hope that the Government is going to attack the first problem with rather more vigour than

the Minister led us to expect, but even so the number of houses for which a subsidy will be approved during the next few years is likely to fall pitifully short of the need. It is all the more important, therefore, that the houses which are built should be put to the best possible use.

Our practice in the past has been to use the subsidy to reduce the rent of all houses of the same type by the same amount regardless of the circumstances of the tenants. New houses have consequently been allocated to comparatively well-to-do people because the rents have remained beyond the means of the poorer families; on many municipal estates no babies and a bank balance seems to have been the ideal qualification for this form of public assistance. A few authorities have tried to meet the difficulty by selecting their tenants for specially cheap houses either from slum-dwellers or on a poverty test. This is not really satisfactory because (as recent surveys have shown) not all slum dwellers are in need of special help and not all poor families *remain* in need of it. What is to happen, for instance, when a family whose income on admission was 50s. with three children all at school, is found a few years later, when the same children are earning, to be in receipt of £6 a week?

The only practical way of securing that "rent relief should be given only to those who need it and only for so long as they need it," seems to lie in some method of using the subsidy to grade rents according to the income of the tenant and to the number of his dependent children. As the children grow up and begin to earn, or if for any other reason the family becomes more prosperous, the rebate from rent would automatically dwindle until the full standard rent was paid. There would then be no reason to turn such a family from the house and the neighbourhood to which it has become accustomed; the subsidy to which it is no longer entitled would simply be freed for another house and another tenant. By lopping off part where it was not needed we should be able to add a bit more where it was, and offer cheaper houses than at present to families who could not otherwise move from the slums.

Such a system can be applied either to houses already built under the Wheatley Act, which could most easily be done on a change of tenancy, or to houses being built with the Greenwood subsidy. Some authorities have already adopted scales of rent rebates, and in no case, so far as I know, have they met with any serious administrative difficulties. But, generally, the income test is so stringent and the rebates so meagre that these schemes can have only a limited usefulness, and much more determined action is needed if we are to make the best use of the diminished means now at our disposal.

I will be glad to give any of your readers who are interested particulars of the schemes already in operation.

The Family Endowment Society, MARJORIE E. GREEN
52 Romney Street, S.W.1.

THE BULPINGTON OF BLUP

SIR,—Mr. Wells informs us that he has not the smallest intention of supporting young men who propose to do nothing in a future war. As one who watched Mr. Birrell building frame-houses in the Argonne for destitute old women living in the cellars of a burnt-out village, I have come to the conclusion that such work will be much too dangerous in the next war. The future is with those who survive, and the hope of mankind is that a larger and larger proportion of young men and women will learn the technique of evasion, to become the parents of a race immune to the crusading spirit which informs both nationalists and internationalists alike. Like Mr. Wells I received a scientific education, and evasion of war seems to me one of the chief biological qualifications for survival. My chief concern is that it should be correlated with intelligence and courage and not only with left-handedness, flat footedness and blindness.

Hilton Hall, Hunts. DAVID GARNETT

SIR,—The intellectual disingenuousness which Mr. Francis Birrell complained of in *The Bulpington of Blup* is equally apparent in Mr. Wells's methods of controversy. In his first letter to you there is the untrue insinuation that Mr. Birrell said only exconchies had the right to engage in pacifist propaganda. In his second letter there is the untrue insinuation that Mr. Birrell said young men ought to do nothing in or about the next war. What Mr. Birrell in fact said was that he urged on young men "the duty of refusing any kind of war service in the next war to end war." Surely Mr. Wells must know that during the last war, while he was devising tendencious messages to be dropped in Germany and inventing advertising slogans for the Allies, those who refused war-service were very far from doing nothing. They were for the most part either relieving distress with the Quakers in France or Russia, or carrying on peace propaganda in England, or making sacks and being bullied by warders in gaol. It is difficult to exaggerate the spiritual isolation they endured or the courage with which they stood up for their convictions. If Mr. Wells considers they did nothing it would be interesting to learn from him what more positive action they should have taken. Mr. Wells would be a more convincing advocate for himself if, instead of sneering at Mr. Birrell's activities as a conchy, he could admit that he was himself as hopelessly deceived as the majority of his countrymen about the issues of the Great War, and confess clearly his regret at having withheld his sympathy from the pacifists at a time when they so desperately needed it. For if he ceased to defend his intellectual behaviour in the last war it would be easier to feel certain that he will have the intellectual firmness to resist the mass-emotion provoked by the next war, which may well be equally popular and equally plausible.

Reform Club. RAYMOND MORTIMER

SIR,—I wonder if it would be forgivable in one who has never raised a finger in the cause of international peace to implore the real pacifists not to waste their influence, even for one second, in private bickering. Any one who knows Mr. Birrell is aware that his love of peace is deep-rooted in his mind and heart; and from Mr. Wells's writings and broadcastings of late years I should have thought it was clear that his desires and his efforts are directed towards a world-peace. But what would it matter if their records were of the blackest, so long as they were willing to work in the cause of peace *now*? It is a queer religion that refuses converts, and the peace lovers are so few, the time so short.

All over Europe there are parents like myself with sons just on the verge of manhood; boys brought up to sun-bathe and ask questions; who in their intelligence and kindliness seem considerably more fitted for living than dying. To offer them, as a reward for the delight they have given us, the front-line bullets or Wormwood Scrubs as their manhood's alternative choice hardly seems an adequate parental gesture. If they are confronted with this choice, I suppose we shall have one overpowering wish—that in their decisions they stand up square to their own consciences. But do let us be grateful, not only to Mr. Birrell and Mr. Wells, but to any and every Tom, Dick and Harry who is working publicly or privately to prevent the terrible necessity of such a choice.

Cross House, DOROTHEA M. WRIGHT
Fawkham, Kent.

SIR,—Mr. Birrell has, in my view, under-estimated the effectiveness of literature as a pander to "patriotism" and militarism, and has over-estimated the ability of the mind trained in literary culture to resist the mass emotions which surge through nations in time of war. The scientist may supply the weapons which intensify the destructiveness and horror of war; but the scientist, like the rest of us, derives part of the stimulus to military activities from literature, history and philosophy. During the last war did not the poets prove extremely useful to propagandists in search of language to stir our passions and invigorate our "patriotism"? Surely most of the phraseology which confers a spurious nobility on an essentially bestial activity is a product of literary effort. In the next war, as in the last, I should imagine that the stamp and thunder of *Henry V* will prove a most potent instrument for rousing jingoistic sentiments in the minds of those boys and young men who are easily fired by magnificent language. Is not the rhetoric which is used to cloak the real issues of a war derived in part from literature and the historians?

In 1919, I heard a lecture by a distinguished historian on Teutonism in History. Under the influence of the prevailing national sentiment this historian was led to employ all his knowledge and expository skill to depreciate the contribution of the Germans to European civilisation, and he spoke in terms which he would certainly not have used, even if he had agreed with the thesis, either before the war or at the present time. To my knowledge quotations from Plato were put forward by a scholarly member of a military tribunal to justify the harsh treatment of a conscientious objector . . . Even in our recent outburst of "patriotic" sentiment (now defunct), Lord Snowden (in introducing his supplementary budget of 1931) found a quotation from Swinburne an extremely effective means of stupefying the

critical powers of the nation and so of obscuring the true nature of the crisis.

Mr. Birrell says that without the scientist we should have known no cannon balls more dangerous than coconuts. The scientist might reply that without the philosopher and the historian we should have less chance of deluding ourselves into believing that we are the heroic instruments of a divine purpose when we are engaged in tribal quarrels, and that without the poet to feed our patriotic emotions with ennobling words our wars might be less bitterly and destructively waged.

Mr. Birrell might say that the poets and philosophers of the past are not responsible if fools or knaves misuse their works. But the same reply is open to the scientist. It is beside the point, moreover, to argue that most post-war writers (when they are not completely detached from any living political and social issue) are pacifist in temper. We should expect this, since they have been living at a time when the evil effects of war are being experienced, and when *all* intelligent persons have a horror of another outbreak. The evidence of the last war—and this was the real test—would suggest that a literary, philosophical or historical training is no more likely than a scientific training to produce a mind which can resist the infection of war-time emotionalism.

22 Hall Road, Hull. G. C. ALLEN

PACIFISM AT OXFORD

SIR,—I venture to suggest that Lord Allen in his protest printed in your paper has completely missed the point at issue in the wording of the Oxford Union Resolution. If it had been framed in the ordinary pacifist language it would have passed with little comment in the press. Precisely what gave it significance was the careful and deliberate reference to "King and Country." Herein lay its wisdom. Its framers chose just those words which are used by the warmongers and their press to hustle everybody into war. The phrase appeals to a false and meretricious patriotism, and deliberately to bring it into the open and repudiate it beforehand seems to me the act of long-sighted and responsible persons and not of "tactless and graceless" students, as Mr. Garvin terms them. The very fact that he is so annoyed and that he and his like still find in the term "King and Country" a "traditional phrase symbolising everything in the nation's life and soul" shows how necessary the resolution was. CONRAD NOEL

The Vicarage, Thaxted.

THE CONTEXT OF A CARROT

SIR,—Before munching "Critic's" carrot may I give the hee-haw a context?

"Mrs. ——, wife of the Rector of ——, said there was nothing whatever which differentiated women from men except sex.—Daily Paper."

Sometimes we find people trying to get away from the fact that the objections raised to the ordination of women are objections arising out of a pre-occupation with sex. There is nothing whatever, let it be remembered, that differentiates women from men except sex. Anyone who argues against women being ordained is necessarily emphasising sex. On the other hand it is the humanity of women which the advocates of women's ordination wish to emphasise. The advocates are by no means necessarily feminists; their opponents are necessarily anti-feminists.

St. George's Rectory, NORAH ROBERTS
19, Woburn Square, W.C.1.

GALSWORTHY

SIR,—I have been entrusted with the official biography of the late John Galsworthy, and should be grateful for the publicity of your columns to say how much I should appreciate communications therefor—whether in the way of original letters (which would be carefully and promptly transcribed and returned to the owner), or of personal reminiscences and anecdotes bearing on any period of Mr. Galsworthy's life or phase of his activities.

The Oaks, 59 Parkside, H. V. MARROT
Wimbledon, S.W.19.

HATS OFF TO JAPAN

SIR,—In view of the "Hats Off To Japan" attitude of the Rothermere press, some quotations from an article entitled "Watch Japan" by the late Lord Northcliffe, which appeared in the *Daily Mail* on April 18th, 1922, may be of interest:

"Before the (Washington) Conference Japan had the enormous advantage of an alliance with Great Britain. Only those who are aware of our great prestige in the Far East can understand what it meant to the Chinese when they were told by the Japanese that all the aggressive acts of Japan in seizing Chinese territory had the support of Great Britain . . . These are the same Japanese people whose Government, when things were going badly for England in 1916, ordered the Japanese newspapers to publish the most abominable insults and reflections on the bravery of our soldiers and sailors at a time when the Japanese were our Allies. I say "ordered" deliberately, because the power of the military party in Japan over every newspaper is absolute. . . . We can hardly suppose that the Japanese have changed their plan for mastering China as the result of the Washington Conference. I venture to prophesy that they will merely alter their tactics and adapt them to the new circumstances . . . Before I visited Japan I said to one of our most distinguished authorities on the Far East—a Scotsman who had lived for years in those romantic lands—'What is the object of Japan?' He replied: 'The control of China.' 'And then?' 'The control of the world; for who controls China could control the world' . . . When calling attention to any matter that affects Japan we have always to remember that hourly, daily, weekly—morning, noon, and night—Japanese propaganda is at work in the form of bribed newspapers, propaganda news agencies, propaganda plays, and propaganda films, and that quite a considerable amount of this propaganda has been widely diffused in Great Britain and the United States. . . As for official and ambassadorial 'official denials' (Japanese), let the public study them in detail since the signing of the first Anglo-Japanese pact. The result of that study supplies convincing evidence of their insincerity and worthlessness. . . ."

Bournemouth. J. A. FRANKLIN

Miscellany

COMPLEMENTS OF THE SEASON

A VISIT to my godmother, Miss Jenny Villars, in the country—"The Manor House, Little Babbiton"—always makes an impression on me. I remember I went down there last on a Friday night, at the end of the Summer, arriving exactly in the nick of time for dinner.

My godmother met me in the hall, and we embraced fondly in front of the brass gong on the hall table. "How nice this is!" we both cried. "How well you're lookin'!" she exclaimed. "I thought you wouldn't want to bother with changin' all in a hurry, I thought you'd prefer somethin' to eat straight away. Come along into the dining-room, dinner is all ready." She took my arm, leading me into the dining-room.

She herself was already dressed in the familiar black evening gown, with the black sparks scattered over its folds, and the little loose white ermine jacket over it. My godmother is about forty-séven; a thin lady. Her coiffure is in the English style—that is to say at once vague and neat. Her dress the same. For example, in the daytime the multiplicity of jackets, short and long, scarfs, collars, and tying ends, that she wears one on top of the other, give a very respectable English effect, like the leaves of a lettuce from the kitchen garden. Her face is a pink and white full moon, the expression modest and innocent. (At first sight this pink and white face looks serene; but later one sees that it is altogether too sensitive, and also too sensible-looking for that.)

We sat down to table. The aged parlour maid, Hetty, trotting round with frail humped back, and skinny claws tightly clutching the various plates and dishes, served us with the first course—clear lukewarm soup. Next came minced cod in white sauce served up in cockle shells. Tough meat followed the fish, in a watery stew. A forest of narrow green paper bags with gold butterflies painted on the front of each, ranged upon the side table, caught my eye. "I'm goin' to fill those bags up with assorted caramels for the village children to take away after their tea in the old coach-house to-morrow. But I do believe I entirely forgot to warn you of to-morrow night's

entertainment! The Babbiton Operatic Society (which consists of the tradespeople there, you know) are actin' a 'Phantasia,' written by myself and Gwennie Price, at the Babbiton Town Hall. I have promised to take the little Babbiton school children along to it in a charabanc, after the tea. Shall you be able to stay on for it? In any case there is no earthly *need* for you to come."

But my godmother's remarkable productions have been the pride and terror of our family for years—filled to the brim as they are with everything that is grisly. When we were children we acted in scores of them.

"I wouldn't have missed it for the world! and yet, alas! I cannot stay. What is it all about this time?" I answered.

"Oh, it's only just a silly thing," cried my godmother. "Just nonsense—with a chorus of beheaded Royal Potentates, a chorus of Magic Scorpions, and a comic chorus (for the children) of dishes of food—puddin's, joints, custard pies—you know, just a simple thing for the village people to laugh at."

Here old Hetty brought forward a pale chocolate blancmange, with little tinned, halved apricots in a wreath round the base of it. It was standing in a heavy embossed silver dish, which she placed very slowly with trembling hands on the table in front of my godmother. The latter started telling me the gossip.

"I'm obliged to take these wretched daily Roumanian lessons now," she told me, "from the poor unfortunate man who rents our farm from us. He's been with us for ten years, and he can't afford to pay the rent these days; I haven't the heart to turn him away; and if it wasn't for myself and Gwennie Price takin' these Roumanian lessons daily I imagine the poor man would be literally starvin'! Have some more chocolate puddin'? No? However he will keep on spittin' into the fire durin' the lesson. Really a most extraordinarily disquietin' habit. And what with that, and then the fact that I know I can never, under any remotest chance, ever possibly want to speak Roumanian—the lessons do seem somethin' of a weary burden. Shall we move into the drawing-room?"

It was always a pleasant relief to get up and leave the barren Victorian dining-room.

In the chintz-covered drawing-room my godmother showed me her latest watercolour sketches. She handed me, one by one, the stiff, recalcitrant sheets from off her block; each one grained like crocodile skin, bruised, sogged, and indented all over, as if the burly fabric had been fighting with her tooth and nail all the while, defending its virginity from her remorseless paint brushes. Gazing down with me upon the last sketch, my godmother murmured, "Yes . . . I try each year to get there in time for the bluebells. They've always been nearly over before. But this year I think I've really been rather successful." I looked up at her face, pleased and dreamy, contemplating the sketch. It was clear that she was seeing, not the actual paper in her hand—the dark, damp remains of the struggle that had taken place between brushes and paper—but the airy, echoing spaces of the great beech wood in early summer, the hundreds of tiny bluebells shivering and jumping on their wires in the criss-cross currents of the summery breezes, all the spruce animation of a wood in springtime.

"Do remind me to take you there in the springtime!" she ejaculated. "It's really the most delightful spectacle!"

We went to bed early that night, having first decorated the coach-house with the flags of all nations for the tea-party.

Next morning after breakfast my godmother took me to see the new cygnets on the lake. Walking down the narrow path that led through the oak copse to the lake beyond, one glance was enough to show that autumn had been some time upon the scene down here in the country. Fallen leaves lay everywhere; and oak trees, silver birches, and the empty fields beyond stood still in a trance, in a species of infinitely wan sunlight that was vaguely suffusing the hazy atmosphere. When we came to the lake, which is quite a large one, we stood upon the bank. There were the four speckled cygnets, sitting quite motionless all together in the centre. I glanced at the rowing boat lying among the reeds below us, and suggested pushing out into the lake, and trying to get a nearer view of the birds. So in we stepped. I shoved her off out through the rustling reeds, and away we slid into the glassy open water of the lake. The boat slipped forward without a sound. The water being so extremely shallow, and so calm, that the long grey eels and the green blobby water weeds lying on the white sand at the bottom could be seen as clearly as goods in a shop window. We paddled several times round the cygnets, who remained, tranquil as the reeds and trees around them, floating, as if tied all together, in the selfsame spot. Occasionally they turned their heads to the right, or to the left. Perhaps they were listening to the rushing sound of the weir which came from the middle of the woods behind them—certainly there was nothing else to distract them.

The opposite end of the rowboat swung out and glided off sideways, propelling my godmother, who was knitting away serenely with pink wool at this time—propelling her at an angle of forty-five degrees out towards the side of the lake again. And thus rapidly, silently gliding, off they shot, knitting and godmother together so to speak, as I neatly twisted my oar round in the water. The water swirled and gobbled round my twisted oar-blade, and then as we heeled slowly around silence again fell on the lake, and only the far-away sound of the weir in the woods attracted one's attention. The delicate brittleness of the autumn scenery, of the stubble fields surrounding the lake, and the bare oak branches, seemed repeated in the frail, stiffly jointed body opposite me, in the delicate hollowed collar bones and fine muscles on her middle-aged neck and wrists. The skin of her throat and hands, satiny white and yet paperdry, resembled the gleaming bark of the birch trees on the bank, in front of which she was now slowly passing. Her eyes, too, transparent and remote, matched the spring-like blue remote spaces up above the sunlit oak copse. But what was more interesting, an identical spirit seemed to inform both landscape and lady. The stubble and coarsely springing thistles in the fields, the bracken and brambles covering the low hillsides, the distant downs and valleys—all lay tranquilly dreaming, muffled up in the rich hazy glow of the season. And on my godmother's innocent face, utterly absorbed above the pink knitting, sat the very same glowing delicately muted vigour.

"I think I have just time to show you the patent new hen-houses before my Roumanian lesson," said my godmother, as she stepped out onto the mooring board. "Hulloa Cork! What are you doing up here?" Cork was the faded old chestnut spaniel. His cumbrous, dusty form, like an old bolster on four castors, was awaiting us on the landing stage. All together we passed, single file, through the oak copse, and came out again into the kitchen garden. Arrived in the stable yard beyond, "Well! Here are the patent hen-houses!"

Cork sat down in the open stable doorway in the sunshine. He began scratching behind his ear with his hind leg. The hen-houses were no more than three foot square, a tattered cabbage dangled on a string from the roof of each, and a mediocre brown hen with drooping head stood in the far corner of one of them. My godmother explained: "This cabbage dangles just out of reach of the hen from this hook on the ceiling you see, thus compelling the hen to leap up and snatch at the cabbage if she desires to eat. Well then, you're supposed to scatter the grain all amongst this patent grille affair on the floor, makin' it exceedingly difficult to scratch it out again; and thus giving the hens a lot more exercise that way also! In fact, one may truly say," finished off my godmother, with satisfaction, shutting the hen-house door again, "that the hens, although cooped up in no more than a bare three foot square space, are under this patent system enabled to spend their entire lives in alternately hoppin' and scratchin'."

My godmother was obliged to leave me after the coach-house tea, in her charabanc of village children, as I still stood waiting on the doorstep for the car to take me to the station.

Colourless in the chill autumn dusk she sat, in her old curled sheepskin overcoat, in the middle of the charabanc, which

stood, gently roaring on the drive, chock-a-block with little round heads. Suddenly there came a much louder roar, a shriek from the gears, and the carload shot forward, and stopped dead. Hundreds of shrill titters rose up instantaneously from the charabanc, like the sound of a bush full of birds disturbed suddenly in the night.

"Good-bye again!" called out my godmother. "Don't forget to tell your mother that I accept her offer to buy Kitty's old sewin' machine. I am comin' up Friday week, and will fetch it away with me in the Daimler. . . ." The charabanc hove slowly away round the corner, and I was left staring at the darkening laurel bushes.

JULIA STRACHEY

THE SHELL

THE azure films upon her eyes
Are folded like the wings of terns,
But still the wavering tide returns
And in her hair an ocean sighs:
Still in her flesh the Anger glows
And in her breathing seems to hiss
The phantom of the fiercest kiss
With which we slew its crimson rose.
As in some flushed barbaric shell
Whose lips of coral, sharked with pearls,
Of the remembered surges tell—
A ghostly siren swells the roar
And sings of the deserted shore
Within whose caves the ocean swirls.

VESPERS ON THE NILE

WHEN to their roost the sacred ibis file
Mosquito-thin against the fading west,
And palm-trees fishing in the crimson Nile
Dangle their windless effigies of rest,

Scarce to the moon's hushed conquest of the blue
Have waked the wingless warblers of the bogs
Or (to the lunar sabbath staunchly true)
The jackals sung their first selenelogues.

When through the waste, far-flung as from a steeple,
First in slow rumours, then in sounding choir,
The lamentation of an ancient people
Sounds by the waters and the sands of fire.

This was the strain, the Amphionic lyre,
By which were carted Thebes' colossal stones,
Which, though it lifted pyramid and spire,
Yet rang their ruin in prophetic tones:

And centuries have heard the plaint persist,
Since Pharaoh's foreman stood with lifted quirt
Or swung the bloody sjambok in his fist
To cut the sluggard through his hairy shirt.

Though all has changed, yet theirs is still the bondage,
Still theirs the toil; their recompense forlorn
To rasp the thistles, crop the withered frondage,
And bite the bitter stubble of the corn.

Still as if Pharaoh's sjambok cut their rumps,
Sick for some Zion of the vast Inane,
The effort of a thousand rusty pumps
Wheezes untiring through their shrill refrain.

Where royal suns descending left no stains,
Where forms of power and beauty change and pass,
One epic to eternity remains—
The heehawhallelujahs of the Ass.

ROY CAMPBELL

THE ANCIEN RÉGIME

THREE FRENCH REIGNS (LOUIS XIV, XV, XVI). Loan Exhibition in aid of the Royal Northern Hospital at 25, Park Lane.

IT is a weakness of philosophers to find unity where little or none exists. And the three famous Louises who appear as sponsors to this exhibition have greatly led generalisers into their favourite error. It would be interesting to set an examination paper to M. André Maurois (who provides an airy preface to the catalogue along lines just indicated), and find out how easily he can distinguish between "Louis XIII" and "Early Louis XIV," or between "Louis XVI" and "Revolution." But even if there were this unity, even if these three reigns do represent an arc in politics and taste, we should not be able to deduce it from this exhibition. Not even such a sublimely majestical settee as No. 529, nor the Louis XIV silver, which is among the minor delights of the exhibition, can make up for the absence of any painting by Poussin or Claude, or a single Gobelins tapestry in the grand manner. Their absence, though no reflection on the organisers of the exhibition, destroys it as a mirror of history. There is, in fact, but little Louis XIV painting to be seen, though attention should be given to the large portrait by Largillière (48), that admirable painter of the *bourgeoise*, who was partially revealed to us at the French Exhibition. Yet a Mignard would have been more characteristic of the period, had a choice to be made. Watteau must count as a Louis XIV painter, and is represented by some moderate paintings, some admirable drawings, and a very interesting small *Virgin and Child* after Rubens.

Louis XIV is, in fact, under-represented. We should not gather from the present exhibition the splendour and variety of the reign. When we come to the eighteenth century, however, there is a change for the better, and we are in a position, should we desire to do so, to observe a development in taste. Too much of the furniture, unfortunately, is of the ornate order known as *style poule de luxe*. Apart from the fact that Marie Antoinette Sèvres is intolerable to most people nowadays and is already over-represented in the Wallace Collection, the fun of the eighteenth century is to be found in the *bourgeoisie*, not at Court. A larger selection of simple, middle-class furniture would have been not only nicer to look at, but would have brought home the essential feature of the reign of Louis XV, the growing prestige of the *roturier*. Still among the minor *objets de vertu* there will be much to delight both the aesthete and the historian. The eighteenth century was great at artificial flowers (how exactly do you fit Rousseau into this?), and we have here a large and varied collection which should appeal to modern artists who have been experimenting on the same lines. In case No. 230 is some delicious *Chinoiserie* porcelain, fat, smiling Oriental gods and benign Chinese sages, recalling all the novels of Voltaire and the *cénacles* of the *clique holbachique*. They bring us up against the sensibility of the only generation which has ever been optimistic, sentimental, enlightened and intelligent at the same moment. Charming in a different manner are two nearby china tureens (227) in the form of singularly luscious cabbages, which make the mouth water to look at them. What a lot of fun people had in the second half of the eighteenth century.

The eighteenth century paintings are, however, the *bonne bouche* of the exhibition, nearly all the best painters from Watteau to David being represented. Fragonard is the most in evidence. We have two lovely studies in his early manner, *The Cascade* (118) and *The Shady Grove* (123), painted on a visit to Italy, and a delicious sepia drawing of an Italian garden (92). We can also admire more than one specimen of his most impressionistic manner and some sad but biographically interesting experiments in the manner of Greuze and even of David, with which the poor old painter who survived into the Empire sought to recapture his lost popularity. Compare with these last efforts the very early "eighteenth" century portrait

of Caffieri by that great *arriviste* David, which hangs upon the stairs, and reflect that this same man invented the *décor* for the preposterous *fêtes* connected with the Goddess of Reason and placed on canvas with such dazzling fidelity the crowning of Napoleon. In the Dijon Museum there is an early subject piece by David, which is little more than a copy of Fragonard. Members of Parliament are not the only people to change with the times.

The Bouchers are not as representative as the Fragonards. We miss those scenes of domestic and rustic life, which bring us nearest the spirit of that brilliant painter. But very remarkable is (513) *Les Cerises*, a most impressionistic triangle of a boy in a tree, throwing down cherries to two girls ; and we may also commend a small portrait by him of Mme. de Pompadour's dog, wittily decked out in the emblems of a Turkish Pasha. Mme. de Pompadour comes very well out of the exhibition. The two greatest painters of the mid-eighteenth century were perhaps Chardin and Perroneau. Of the Chardins the *Goblet d'Argent* is a dazzlingly modern still life, illustrating the author's abiding interest in the nature of reflections. An excellent oil by Perroneau (506) has adorned Lord Coventry with a monumental and yet discreet and unobtrusive dignity, of which Perroneau alone has the secret. People who like a "sweet" illustration will be delighted by a small painting by Schall, *L'Attente* (450), portraying in an enchanting manner a girl waiting for her lover in a wood.

This exhibition is rich, therefore, in excellent works particularly of the eighteenth century, and obviously these exhibits have some relation to each other and to general history. But visitors will be wise enough to regard them as simply things to be looked at and will not speculate much as to whether the Marie Antoinette Sèvres or Chardin's still life do or do not show the influence of *La Nouvelle Héloïse*. Yet one figure must symbolise for us the eighteenth century, the long-living and formidable Voltaire. So, before leaving, cast your eye on a statuette of him by Houdon (91) and admire the terrible sinuosity of his fingers.

FRANCIS BIRRELL

PLAYS AND PICTURES

Once in a Lifetime

Mr. Kaufman's satirical genius has never had a more fruitful field than the mad first year of the talkies in Hollywood, and *Once in a Lifetime* (written in conjunction with Moss Hart) in favourable circumstances might well fill the Queen's Theatre for months to come. Whether it will do so depends on how successful the Birmingham Repertory Company becomes in mastering an alien technique and accent. American farce is a kind of punctuated machine-gunnery, with three jokes whizzing past your head for each one that scores a direct hit, and the conscientious marksmanship of Sir Barry Jackson's company is unexhilarating. The accent should right itself soon, and if the sagging passages can be tightened all will be well. Glogauer, the magnate, is one of those rare creatures of the stage who are so utterly outrageous that they light up whole scenes with their imbecility. Mr. Charles Victor has mastered all the technique that the part requires and brings in addition the engaging, confiding qualities of wicked small boyhood, the petulance, the arrogance, and then an almost wistful hero-worship of his new general supervisor, whose dumbness (in the transatlantic sense) is paralysingly, hauntingly complete. But talkie-crazy Hollywood is a place where ordinary mundane values are reversed—the crasser the richer. Mr. Richard Caldicot seems always to be leaving the stage just in time to avoid a righteous assassination, but he is triumphant in the end. Mr. Derek Cotter, as a "lost" author, provides the essential contrast of sanity in the midst of the riot.

Beauty and the Beast

Since Miss Beatrix Thomson is *The Princess in the Cage* one is compelled to be interested in her adventure. But her very excellences only serve to underline the hesitations of this French melodrama, adapted by Mr. C. B. Fernald, at the Westminster. She is too subtle and too tempestuous for the simplicities of Ruritania. True, the author was uncertain of his intention. Into a straightforward tale of revolution in an Eastern capital he has introduced complexities of a spiritual kind. Rescued from the mob by a leader of the insurrection, Princess Marie-Marguerite was only temporarily reluctant to accept the new order. There are, she found, compensations in the fate that is mistakenly supposed to be worse than death. But the Princess had her Royal pride. Taken without her own consent, she revenged herself upon her champion by betraying him to the people. This is simply not done in Eastern capitals. As straightforward melodrama, the play might have been a success. Encumbered with the self-questionings of Freudian philosophy, it is unintentionally ridiculous.

Ingenious

Elmer Rice and Philip Barry have made a neat job of a complicated tangle in *Cock Robin*, which is being produced by the People's National Theatre at the Little. It is a backstage-detective-costume-comedy-drama, without the least attempt at character drawing, or anything confusing of that kind. Real actors and actresses—like Miss Nancy Price and Mr. Bernard Nedell—producing amateur dramatics provide the comedy, the costume, and the backstage, and a member of the amateur cast whom everybody wishes dead and anybody might have killed, does the rest. Nearly everyone has a gun, and the villain wasn't murdered with a gun anyway, and nobody wants the murderer convicted, so that does away with the police, and one can settle down to one's detection in comfort. Who *did* kill Cock Robinson is undiscoverable till two minutes before the end, except by a credibly wild guess. It is all highly improbable, ingeniously manufactured, and acted with speed, finish and high spirits.

Ski-ing at the Rialto

The White Flame, Frau Leni Riefenstahl's new film at the Rialto, is, to my taste, a great improvement on her last effort, *The Blue Light*. Lacking as it does that picture's all-pervasive atmosphere of pensive artiness, *The White Flame* consists almost entirely of a ski paper-chase in which fifty skiers take part. The pictures, which are amazingly photographed, vary rapidly between the highly exciting and the genuinely comic, two ski-acrobats performing amazing feats of folly on the snow. The utmost is extracted from the chase by very cunning variations of speed and a musical accompaniment of unusual competence. The prevailing note of heartiness and good-fellowship was perhaps overstressed, but the everlasting peaks and dumb eternities are as good sites for a dream-world as any other. *The White Flame* is preceded by an extremely interesting old film of life in Manchuria. Curiously enough, the commentator indulges, with a thick American accent, in some shamelessly tendentious Japanese propaganda and jeers at all international efforts to settle national disagreements. Some members of the audience, I am glad to say, showed marked disapproval of this dangerous twaddle.

THE COMING WEEK

FRIDAY, MARCH 3rd—
Kingsley Martin on "Crime and Publicity," University College, Gower Street, 8.30.

SATURDAY, MARCH 4th—
National Congress Against War. Bermondsey Town Hall, 10.30 a.m. And on March 5th.
Rugby Football. Royal Navy *v.* The Army, Twickenham.

SUNDAY, MARCH 5th—
Prof. Lancelot Hogben on "Is Religion a Private Affair?" Conway Hall, 11.
Sara Allgood, Reading from the Irish Poets, Guildhouse, Eccleston Square, 3.30.

TUESDAY, MARCH 7th—
Geoffrey M. Wilson on "Why I Would Have Voted for the Oxford Resolution," Friends House, Euston Road, 1.20.
Badminton. All England Championships, Horticultural Hall.
W. de la Mare, Reading from his Own Works, Mary Ward Settlement, Tavistock Place, 8.
Léner Quartet, Queen's Hall, 8.15.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 8th—
Miss Ellen Wilkinson on "Socialism and the Crisis," Caxton Hall, Victoria Street, 8.15.
B.B.C. Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Sir Henry Wood, Queen's Hall, 8.15.

THURSDAY, MARCH 9th—
J. H. Driberg on "Practical Uses of Anthropology," Caxton Hall, Victoria Street, 5.30.
Royal Philharmonic Orchestra, conducted by Sir Thomas Beecham, Queen's Hall, 8.15.
Operatic Performance of Handel's "Saul," Birkbeck College, Bream's Buildings, Fetter Lane, 8.15. Also on March 10th and 11th.
Chaliapine, Albert Hall, 8.15.

Current Literature

BOOKS IN GENERAL

IT is a thousand pities that Lytton Strachey never took Oliver Cromwell as the subject of a biography. For Cromwell, one of the most contradictory and perplexing characters, would by turns have exasperated, captivated, and repelled him, but would always have stimulated his curiosity. And the result might have been a book equal if not superior to *Queen Victoria*, full of portraits as vividly illuminating as the sketch of Gladstone. I think it was the existence of a false picture of Cromwell which made Lytton Strachey shrink from attempting a true one, for Carlyle's bad temper and his hero-worship—not to speak of the enthusiastic jargon in which he wrote—have made Cromwell distasteful. The first fault in the usual presentation of Cromwell is that he is made out to be a thoroughly bourgeois figure—a God-fearing farmer. In fact, he was an aristocrat, the cadet of a very rich, wildly extravagant family, who until his uncle's ruin was frequently in contact with the Royal family. The story of Charles I and Oliver playing together as children is a probable one; that Oliver made the young Prince's nose bleed sounds as though it had been invented later. The Cromwells were aristocrats; it is a mistake, I think, to speak of them, as Mr. Belloc has done, as *nouveaux riches*. Their fortunes were founded on the confiscation of monastic property, but so were those of the Russells and the Cecils. Oliver was not likely to feel a *nouveau riche* because his great-great-great-great-uncle, Thomas Lord Cromwell Earl of Essex, was a self-made man. The determining fact in Cromwell's life was not that he belonged to the new rich, but to the new poor. Cromwell had great feeling for his family and the names of its alliances are the names of the men with whose help he ruled England. But this network of cousins, brothers-in-law and sons-in-law, which facilitated his rise to supremacy, and his rule, proved to be the chief obstacle (after his own divided nature) to his taking the title of king or to his successfully founding a dynasty. For his sisters and his daughters had often been given to those who put the "Good Old Cause" before everything else, and regarded Cromwell as an equal "aquainted with temtations and breathing after Christ," in the words in which his daughter, Bridget, married first to Ireton and afterwards to Fleetwood, is described. The most interesting part of a biography of *Henry Cromwell* by Robert W. Ramsey (Longmans, 15*s*.) is that which deals with the hostility and suspicion which existed between Cromwell's sons and their brother-in-law, Fleetwood, and their uncle by marriage, Desborough. When Cromwell wavered doubtfully between accepting or refusing the title of king, Desborough and Fleetwood secretly got up a petition against his doing so from officers in the army, and after Cromwell's death it was they who brought Richard tumbling down.

* * *

Mr. Ramsey's book is valuable, and though it is by no means a model, its vices are pleasantly old-fashioned. He scarcely attempts to make Henry Cromwell a living character, leaving him to speak for himself in his own letters, which are extremely good. An old-fashioned loyalty to the subject of his memoir not only makes him view Henry through rose-coloured spectacles, but also identify himself with the dynastic ambitions of the family. To those of us who are not bound by such a tie, Henry seems the least interesting member of a most fascinating family. Owing to the civil war he went straight from Felsted School into the army and afterwards followed Ireton to Ireland and was with him when he died in delirium, yelling: "I will have more blood! blood! blood!" Mr. Ramsey does not refer to this legend even to dismiss it, but speaks of Henry as "touched with seriousness by his association with Ireton and the memory of his last hours." Owing to the part Henry had played in Ireland, he was sent over to report on the troublesome situation which arose after the Irish had been subjugated and the Act of Settlement had decreed: "that it is not the intention of the Parliament to extirpate that whole nation." For four years, from 1655–1659, Henry ruled Ireland, a task which he describes in a letter after his father's death to his brother Richard:

> In short, my life was made a burthen; and had I not owed a natural and filial obedience, as well as a full subjection, to his late highness, I could not willingly have undergone it. I humbly beg your highnesse's pardon for what I am about to say: I may not unless your highnes commands me against my will and condemns me to my grave, any longer undergoe the charge I did in my father's lifetime. I am not able to live always in the fire.

Unfortunately, Mr. Ramsey never gives us a far-reaching view of the state of Ireland, and his book is only in reality a piecing together of the documents necessary for a real biography: the bones are here, but no more—but the bones tell us much.

* * *

I am grateful for such a book, for it always sends me back to *Memoirs of the Protectoral House of Cromwell*, by the Rev. Mark Noble, 1787, Carlyle's "reverend imbecile friend," whom he never tires of apostrophising in this style:

> Oh my reverend imbecile friend hadst thou never any moral life, but only a sensitive and digestive? Thy soul never longed towards the serene heights all hidden from thee; and thirsted as the hart in dry places wherein no waters be? It was never a sorrow for thee that the eternal pole-star had gone out, veiled itself in dark clouds; a sorrow only that this or the other noble Patron forgot thee when a living fell vacant? I have known Christians, Moslems, Methodists, and, alas, also reverend irreverent Apes by the Dead Sea!

As might be guessed from Carlyle's effusion, Noble's book is a gold mine—full, no doubt, of inaccuracies, trivialities and hearsay of hearsay, but also of the most extraordinarily illuminating stories which would otherwise have been lost. Best of all are the anecdotes, collected from living people who remembered her, of Mrs. Bendysh, who was Ireton's daughter and Cromwell's favourite grandchild, to whom he would tell State secrets when she was six and defy her mother to get them out of her by the severest beatings, which were duly, but ineffectually, administered. Bridget Ireton was very like her grandfather and idolised him as "a saint after the twelve Apostles." She is thus described in her old age:

> I have often seen her in the morning stumping about with an old straw hat on her head, her hair about her ears, without stays, and when it was cold, an old blanket about her shoulders and a staff in her hand; in a word, exactly accoutred to mount the stage as a witch in *Macbeth* . . . yet a stranger to her customs might become astonished to find himself addressed by a princess, while he was looking at a mumper.

She was full of the contradictions of the Cromwell character:

> Of great and fervent devotion towards God, and love to her fellow-creatures and fellow-Christians, yet there is scarcely an instance of impiety, or cruelty, of which she is not capable: fawning, suspicious, mistrustful and jealous without end of all her servants and even of her friends, at the same time that she is ready to do them all the service that lies in her power, affecting all mankind equally, and not according to the services they are able to do her, but according to the service their necessities and miseries demand from her, to the relieving of which neither the wickedness of their characters, nor the injuries they may have done herself in particular are the least exception, but rather a peculiar recommendation.

She was like Oliver in face and habits. Like him, when in doubt, she would shut herself up fasting, weeping and praying in her closet until, a piece of scripture coming into her mind with supernatural force, she would determine her conduct by it and nothing would then turn her from her course.

> She would on her visits drink wine in great plenty; and the wine used to put her tongue in very brisk motion. . . . She would never suffer a servant to attend her on one of these night visits. . . . At about one in the morning, she used to put herself on top of the mare and set off on her return. When the mare began to move, Mrs. Bendysh began to sing a psalm in a very loud, but not very harmonious key.

She once tried to fight a duel in a stage coach with a gentleman who defamed her grandfather. . . .

But the Cromwell character is absolutely absorbing, and one day perhaps someone who has felt its fascination will write a book about the family.

MERCURY PATTEN

THE SCOTCH VILLON

The Poems of William Dunbar. Edited by WILLIAM MACKAY MACKENZIE. *Porpoise Press.* 12*s.* 6*d.*

Sir Walter Scott said of Dunbar that he was "a poet unrivalled by any that Scotland has ever produced." He has even been called the Dante of Scotland, chiefly on the strength of his *Dance of the Seven Deadly Sins through Hell*; but the usual comparisons are with Chaucer and Villon (strange opposites). Dr. William Mackenzie in his introduction to a collection of *The Poems of William Dunbar*, which he claims to be the first complete and satisfactory collection, stresses the affinity with Chaucer, telling us that he is the Chaucer of Scotland, but makes only two or three short references to Villon. The fact of the matter is that though Dunbar owed something to Chaucer, he bears very little resemblance to Chaucer, but a great deal to the French poet François Villon. His favourite verse-forms are more or less the same as Villon's, definitely ballades, though not orthodox ballades (for many of them are long, and they are all denuded of *envois*). But much of their power lurks in the refrain, which Dunbar carries on through as many as twenty stanzas. Of the influence of Scotch ballad and other rustic minstrelsy there appears to be only a little.

Moreover, both Villon and Dunbar frequently accomplished marvellous metrical effects by threading a number of unconnected words and short phrases together like beads upon a string, a mutual prosody device, I think, never yet pointed out, though Villon's habit of it with proper names is well known. Thus in Dunbar (but occurring more frequently in Dunbar than in Villon):

> Archangellis, angellis, and dompnationis,
> Tronis, potestatis, and marteiris seir,
> And all ye hevinly operationis,
> Ster, planeit, firmament, and speir,
> Fyre, erd, air, and watter cleir,
> To him gife loving, most and lest . . .

And in Villon:

> Filles, amans, jeunes, vieulx et nouveaulx,
> Danceurs, saulteurs, faisans les piex de veaux,
> Vifs comme dars, aguz comme aguillon;
> Gousiers tintans, clers comme gastaveaux,
> Le lesserez là, le povre Villon?

Some of their work sounds as if written in different languages by the same hand; and though the best half-dozen of Dunbar's poems are not quite equal in power and passion to the best half-dozen of Villon's, a general assessment by marks would probably put the two poets level. The notes of Dunbar's verse, as Villon's, are very varied. He is bleak, charming, religious and devotional, derisive, savage, bitter, witty, lovely, cold-blooded, passionate. He writes about hell and heaven, the devil, gardens, and men and women. But his feet were very firm set on the earth, and so he sometimes makes tolerably good poetry out of quite unlikely subjects, such as, for instance, his headache—which it is quite possible he died of; for the manner as well as the year of his death are unknown. It is equally likely that he died of a stab in the back or a kick in the behind, for he satirises very viciously his compatriots of Church and Court, a probable reason for his lack of advancement. On the earthly side of him he is frequently complaining, grousing, petitioning—complaining not only of the wickedness and dishonesty of his age, but also of the way he is despised and kept back from advancement. Says Dr. Mackenzie:

> For the inferior clergy his contempt is unmistakable, and, by all accounts, fully warranted. The clerical order must have been inhumanly callous to remain unruffled by Dunbar's lashings, and, in that case, their influence against him must have weighed heavily with a king like James IV, so sensitive to their appeal.

Of his mental honesty and courage there is no doubt (Dunbar was certainly no time-server) but he was possessed by devils of pride and discontent; and the nature of some of his verse may be judged from such titles as *Complaint to the King Againis Mure; The Flyting of Kennedie; Remonstrance to the King; The Petition of the Gray Horse, Auld Dunbar; The Deville's Inquest.* *The Flyting of Kennedie* is so strong that it makes in comparison the most offensive passages in Roy Campbell's *Georgiad* sound like tame gentlemanly exercises. But the rival poet replied in like manner, calling Dunbar "devil's son," "worm," "scorpion." "sodomite," "thief," to take only five arrows from a huge unwieldy sheaf of scurrility and horrid facts about Dunbar's life which were probably more or less invented. It is impossible to get any real knowledge of Dunbar's life from that kind of thing. We are much better able to judge of facts from one of Dunbar's own poems, where he certainly does not spare himself. If we are to believe him he was in his youth a wandering friar, preaching, begging, cheating, lying, and cajoling. Thus some of his life resembled Villon's; and though Villon wore no friar's dress he belonged to the cockle-shell company called *coquillards*, thieves and blackguards who derisively associated themselves with the palmers and friars. But while Villon was actually a villain (though a very fascinating one) Dunbar probably exaggerates, making his confessions out of a morbid and over-sensitive Scotch conscience. For in a much longer poem, a *Tabill of Confession* (a poem with a very fine opening), Dunbar confesses himself guilty of nearly every possible sin of commission and omission, but with such genuine grief and penitence, that if he wasn't the very worst of moral lepers pleading to God, he was a pitiful sufferer from religious melancholia.

A few other facts about his life are more definitely known. He was born about 1460, took his Master of Arts degree about 1479, and certainly travelled as far as Picardy in France. But he probably travelled in other countries also, acting as the Scotch King's ambassador. He received in 1500 a pension of £10 a year, which was finally in 1510 increased to £80 a year. But Dunbar wanted a benefice, and this he does not seem to have received. He was dogged by misery and misfortune; and many of his poems were not published until long after his death. Like Villon he disappears into the void.

Dr. Mackenzie has had an immense task, and has done his editing work thoroughly. There is a preface, notes on the different MSS., and a glossary—very much needed, as Dunbar was a master of words, and sometimes uses the most remote old Scotch words, even coining words. If any fault is manifest in the very scholarly preface it is that it is a little too bald; and, moreover, might have been extended to some consideration of Dunbar's technique, for Dunbar was an imaginative formalist in an age when poetry was formless.

Although possibly a lesser poet than Burns, he is more imaginative; indeed the most imaginative poet of Scotland. But his

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imagination is of a different order from that of Blake. He was not a poet of pure intuition. He was not in close and easy touch with the Absolute. His inspiration, though a very real thing, was not immense. But he fanned inspiration hard; he cast himself upon the Absolute; he let himself go, and then toiled like a galley-slave to give strong clear form and resonant music to his verse. Some of his poems, such as *The Dance of the Seven Deidly Synnis* and the lovely *Merle and the Nychtingaill*, are great and splendid.

HERBERT E. PALMER

NEW NOVELS

The Quick and the Dead. By GERALD BULLETT. *Heinemann.* 6*s.*

Two of a Kind. By ARTHUR CALDER-MARSHALL. *Cape.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

The Gold Rim. By IRENE RATHBONE. *Dent.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

Without a Stair. By KATHLEEN WALLACE. *Heinemann.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

One of the Ten Thousand. By STEPHEN GRAHAM. *Benn.* 3*s.* 6*d.*

Twos and Threes. By BARBARA WOOTTON. *Gerald Howe.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

Bitter Comedy. By JOY BAINES. *Harrap.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

Human Tempest. By MANUEL KOMROFF. *Heinemann.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

The Quick and the Dead is a decorous story of the boyhood of Claud Calamy whose legitimacy is questioned when he is seven years old: his "father," old Calamy the cobbler, stands by his wife against the evangelical people from the Little Bethel until her death, which seems to have been hastened in some strange, psychical manner by the attentions of the sinister minister, Mr. Fleer. I confess to an uncomfortable feeling that the genuine and original even in this book are vitiated throughout by a mixture of the derivative. You remember, for example, the names in Dickens's notebooks—Tarbox, Tinkling, Squiffins, Melvin Beal, Goldstraw, Mr. Kinch, etc. In this book the names are stylised in the same artificial manner. We have the unpleasant minister, the Rev. Benjamin Fleer, and the pleasant clergyman, Tom Latitude—even Mr. Bullett apologises for "so incredibly fitting" a name—and we get the bully Montifex, the daredevil Rankle, the angelic boy Edward Dove, Beddo's Genteel Academy, and, worst of all, the wicked young Lord Harry Vengeance! This is the author turning the real of his memories into the artificial of his story for the sake of quaint appeal. Few but Dickens got away with that. And so when we get the real boy's recollections, e.g., how he met hundreds of tiny frogs on the road of a summer's day, we are enchanted, but then in comes the author and all becomes vague and unprecise.

However, the book pleases by its calm atmosphere, and old Calamy is a figure that we would have liked to see drawn on a larger scale with greater detail.

Mr. Calder-Marshall, as a modern, falls into the opposite sin—to take his style first. Here we have returned to the extravagance of the "wits" in the effort to realise everything—often with the result that while we admire the image we forget what it is supposed to convey, e.g., "He saw her face between the U of two foreign heads. . . . He saw her throat a steel shaft. . . . His pores were attracted by her magnetic hand, strained as cornfields under vagabond winds." This is abominable, a distinctly modern craze overstressing the importance of the physical. Then there is the opposite effort to get inside the character by sudden disconcerting changes of the pronouns "they . . . she . . . I . . ." without warning and without explanation; and irritating typographical mannerisms equally unnecessary.

If Mr. Calder-Marshall were not so obviously a genuine novelist, a writer of perception and understanding, and, above all, a novelist with a distinctive personality, one would not go to the bother of cursing him for these mannerisms of style. *Two of a Kind* is one of those first novels that makes one note the author's name with care and leaves one eager to see his future work. The central character is Marion Harrison, a sculptor's model whom the business man, Wordsworth, meets and loves in Paris, where she has fled from the boredom of Wimbledon. Unhappily she is unfitted for marriage and motherhood, and when he takes her back to Richmond—which he might have remembered is only a few stations from Wimbledon—she flies back to Paris again. Twenty-five years pass and the story is more or less repeated with her daughter. The book closes with the picture of Marion, old, shrivelled, still seductive—taking her daughter's lover from her—an unpleasant tale, but aerated by the tenderness of a novelist of feeling.

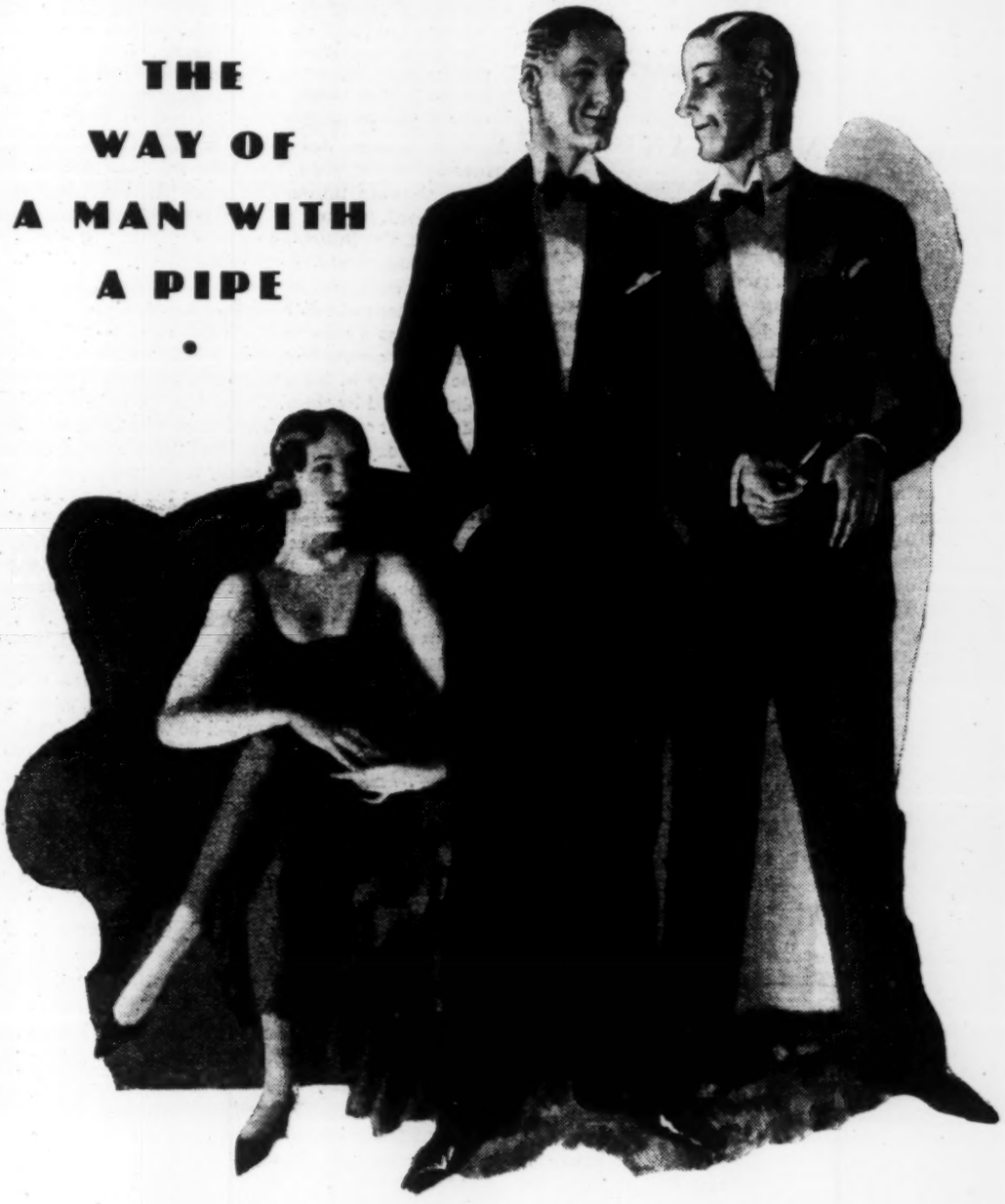
Such novels may give a reviewer some trouble, but he must always find novels like *The Gold Rim* and *Without a Stair* what the Americans call "the cat's meat," i.e., he has seen this type of story a hundred-and-one times before—he can chew it without heat and digest it without tears. If old and toothless he will be all the more pleased for he need not put a tooth in it: they are nice love stories. Of the two I preferred *The Gold Rim*, for it has no pretensions and what it set out to do it has done without display. It recounts the endless little differences between Ralph, the young archaeologist, and Barbara, an archaeologist's daughter, and the happiness of the two—held off because Ralph is too fond of independence—comes as it ought to in the last chapter. *Without a Stair*, a story of love among missionaries in China told without love for the missionaries and much pity for the lovers, is pretentious, and nothing is more irritating in an author who has little to say. Our fathers would have found such a book daring and voluptuous; it would have created a sensation in the days of Miss Elinor Glyn and Miss Marie Corelli. "Knowing that the hour was come for her she threw out an arm and drew him down to her and gave him her lips." And when they are bathing together—"She peeled the black sheath from her body and stood white and wet in the sun." (How many more times shall I have to read of this bathing-scene stuff between lovers? Once, no doubt, genuine, it has now become fake, and *both* these novels again play the changes on it.) This class of novelist must remember what it was that "age could not wither nor custom stale."

It is an extraordinary experience to go from *One of the Ten Thousand* to *Twos and Threes*—both dealing with modern London, both dry and unemotional, but the former supplying motive power by a moral and the latter by cruel satire. The first tells of a stenographer's foolish fondness for a crook and the efforts—happily successful—made to save her. There are shots of prison life interesting enough in an informative way and scenes of "the underworld," but I did not feel any more emotion for the characters than one feels in reading a press report of any such similar sequence of events. Mrs. Wootton manages to get under our skin more with these six short stories. Her pen is slick, smart, corrosive, and the pairs and threes she deals with are etched with bitter acid. An old colonel of sixty proposes to a modern girl: we then see her in her vulgar, modern setting which he has never even imagined. A day in a clerk's life; the last tense day before the parting of lovers who very much want to part and then lose the last train home; the ennui of a kept lady who gently pushes herself out of a window—such are her themes. It is a misanthropic book as well as a satirical one.

As I read *Bitter Comedy*, a wild novel of farming life in Devonshire, I kept thinking of Congreve's saying that you make your characters on the stage larger than life, so that the audience can see them. Miss Baines has taken the process too far. Julian Doone, the woman-hunter, Prosper his half-brother and Lorraine his half-sister, Roger their father whose wife left him—what a querulous, tempestuous family they are! So querulous that one could not but ask—Would not Roger Doone or any Dartmoor man be bankrupt in a year with such helpmeets? That one asks such a question is the measure of the book: it is a question based on a reference to credible experience and implies that this minor *Wuthering Heights* has not risen from the earth—it has been blown out with too heavy air. Violence alone does not make drama, nor brutality strength, and the wilder the scene the more the need for poetry. Yet I do not wish to suggest that this is not a talented piece of writing, vivid, full of colour, and a swift story; and the severity of a reviewer's comparison is always a compliment, at least to the ambition of a writer.

And now the last and in many ways most striking novel on this list. *Human Tempest* hails from America. It is panoramic, kaleidoscopic, swift-flitting as the successive shots of a cinematograph—a brutal, though often extraordinarily vivid, always unlovely, story of New York in the eighteen-thirties. Jane Holden, a prostitute, is murdered by Oliver Benson. The politicians take up the case, the press boosts it, society revels in it; and the result is the downfall of the District Attorney, and the suicide of the acquitted murderer. It is characteristic of the book that in the last pages we see his white skeleton picked clean by the rats in the rat-pit behind Patsy Hearn's grog-bar in the Five Points. A film on paper—O'Flaherty without his saving humanity. And

THE WAY OF A MAN WITH A PIPE



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only one ray of humour. That is Messrs. Heinemann's share; they have made it a large fat book and crossed its white shirt with a purple ribbon—Shallow, or better, Malvolio in Falstaff's jerkin, could not pretend more. "Sad, lady!" might Mr. Komroff say, "I could be sad: this does make some obstruction in the blood, this cross-gartering; but what of that? . . . Some are born great; some achieve greatness, and some . . ."

SEÁN O'FAOLÁIN

A GREAT MUSICIAN

Ferruccio Busoni: a Biography. By EDWARD J. DENT. *Oxford University Press.* 21s.

This life of Busoni by Professor Dent is one of those rare occasions when the biographer and his subject are well met, and a book of outstanding merit is the result. I well remember when in Vienna in 1927, on the occasion of the Beethoven Centenary Festival, sitting with a Viennese friend of mine, Dr. Hedwig Kuranda, in the hall of the University to listen to the addresses given by the delegates from different parts of the world. Most of them spoke in their own language, M. Romain Rolland, for example, spoke in French, and then came the turn of the English delegate, Professor Edward J. Dent, of Cambridge. The audience expected to listen to an address in English. Our habit in this respect being notorious you may judge of their astonishment when Professor Dent began to speak without notes in fluent German; one could almost hear the gasp of surprise through the hall. When he had finished the long and scholarly lecture expected of him I turned to Dr. Kuranda and said: "Well, what did you think of his German?" "Perfect," was the reply; and I felt very proud that an Englishman had wiped the floor with the other delegates as a linguist.

And now Professor Dent, whose command of Italian is at least equal to his knowledge of German, has written a biography of Ferruccio Busoni that is a model of what such a work should be, a book that will have to be translated into German and Italian, because, whatever may be written about Busoni's music in the future, no book could supersede this biography, which is, I think, as near perfection as may be.

To most people in this country, and in Europe and America, Busoni was famous only as a great pianist. Professor Dent knew Busoni intimately for a great many years and knew that Busoni had been a composer from childhood, and that composition, not pianoforte playing, was his primary musical interest. Those who are familiar with Professor Dent's rather dry and witty style, and with his critical and fastidious taste, may be surprised that he should have had such sympathy with Busoni, who was generally considered by most critics to be wild, extravagant and perverse; but his sympathy with Busoni is deep and understanding, so that his book gives the first clear and intelligible portrait of this great musician as he was. Musical scholars and creative musicians have often a poor opinion of virtuosos in spite of the fact that some of the greatest composers (Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, for example) have been the supreme virtuosos of their time. But this is a new development due to the increasing specialisation during the nineteenth century when a type of virtuoso has appeared whose musical understanding is, to say the least, not of the highest order. "Busoni," says Professor Dent, "was different from all other pianists because he had an entirely different mental conception of what could be done with the pianoforte."

The interesting point in this remark lies in the words "mental conception," which in the case of Busoni came first, whereas it would not be an exaggeration to say that the majority of so-called "great pianists" have no mental conception of what they are doing at all, being merely machines—having what the Germans call a *sitzfleisch genie*, a genius of the sitting flesh: in other words an infinite capacity to sit and practise, and about as much "mental conception" as a stuffed rabbit. I would like to name a few of these sitting flesh geniuses who have become famous, but the law of libel prevents me, and perhaps it is better for everybody to find them out for himself.

The words "mental conception" give a cue to the secret of Busoni's attraction for Professor Dent, and indeed for all those musicians among his contemporaries who recognised the rare intellectual power of Busoni. But this was the very quality which for many years made the critics hostile—as it did in the more recent case of Schnabel. They disliked precisely what the more perceptive and profound musicians valued.

For example, Professor Dent writes:

> His conception of Chopin was always terrifyingly grandiose. Passages which most pianists play dreamily and tenderly he would bring out with a solidity and dignity which seemed ruthlessly severe.

Elsewhere Professor Dent says very justly:

> Intellectualism in music is indeed far less willingly condoned by most critics than emotional extravagance. It was Busoni's intellectualism that made them find his playing hard and unfeeling, because he refused to allow himself the slightest concession to current conventions of sentimentality.

Another excellent description of Busoni's playing which I well remember is the word "monumental." Professor Dent quotes this as showing Busoni's own predilection; but we must add to this word, so that it may not be misunderstood, another conception, also Busoni's own word, "live." Busoni's playing was not only monumental but terrifically alive.

But our main curiosity now is in Busoni as a composer. It is a great merit of this book that it makes one believe in Busoni's importance as a composer and helps one to understand his work better. His compositions are much more interesting than those of the majority of his contemporaries even if we feel not quite wholly satisfied by them. Busoni makes very disparaging remarks about Wagner and Puccini, and those who measure achievement by popularity may think he was not justified. The fact remains that most musicians to-day, especially the younger creative ones, would far rather hear Busoni's works than the works of Puccini, because Busoni had a "forward-looking" mind, and he was struggling all his life to achieve as yet unrealised possibilities in music.

In conclusion, I must say a word about the extreme readableness of this book. One goes on and on so enthralled that it is impossible to put the book down, so vividly has the author brought before us this extraordinary personality in all his genius and charm. Professor Dent relates that the last time he went to see him Busoni—who used often to tease him for his academic habit of looking at things from a historical point of view—said: "My dear Dent, how pleased you will be when I am dead and gone, for then you will be able to look at *me* from a historical point of view." Professor Dent has done more, he has re-created the living man and made us share his own deep admiration and love for him.

W. J. TURNER

RUSSIA FROM VARIOUS ANGLES

Memoirs of a Bolshevik. By O. PIATNITSKY. *Martin Lawrence.* 6s.

Twelve Studies in Soviet Russia. With an Introduction by C. R. ATTLEE and G. D. H. COLE. *Gollancz.* 5s.

A Physician's Tour in Soviet Russia. By SIR JAMES PURVES-STEWART. *Allen and Unwin.* 5s.

Babel Revisited. By J. E. LOCKHART. *Centenary Press.* 3s. 6d.

Piatnitsky's Memoirs are an unvarnished account, free from all frills and sentiment, of the life of an active Bolshevik under Tsardom. Here we have Tsarist Russia seen from underneath, from the angle of a disciple of Lenin (of whom we get several personal glimpses) working under orders without a thought of himself as a hero and without a chance of personal glory. We see him for nearly twenty years dogged by the secret police, knocked about, imprisoned and exiled, in constant danger of death by torture (which befell several of his friends while in his company), working to spread among an intolerably oppressed class the glad tidings of *Iskra* and of Lenin, that the day of release was at hand. By such work—and it was the only method of work available—a body of opinion was created, and a body of men trained, to take advantage of the day when Tsardom should have overshot its mark.

To-day the British bourgeoisie surveys the fruits of such men's labours and asks whether the system that has taken the place of Tsardom is good. *Twelve Studies in Russia* is an account of Russia as seen last summer by English Socialists predisposed to view it with favour. The group was composed of members of the New Fabian Research Bureau: each individual concentrated on some particular aspects of Soviet development. The resulting report is not wholly satisfactory and the balance of opinion and fact is not well sustained. Several of the chapters might well have been omitted and more space given to others where there were more new things to say and insufficient room to say them in. But the book contains a great deal that is valuable—a surprising amount at the price. It is only the person who already knows something about Russia, and who is hungry

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for detailed information, who will complain that Dr. Dalton, Mr. Pethick Lawrence and Mr. Mitchison all stop short in their discussion of various aspects of the economic system of answering the really difficult questions; that Mr. Beales, confronted with the impossible task of describing the Soviet political system in twenty pages, gives it up and preaches an admirable sermon; that Mrs. Mitchison's chapter is a pleasant little literary sketch and not the report of an investigation; that Mrs. Cole, whose chapter is excellent reading, was severely handicapped in her account of the conditions of women and children by the fact that the schools are shut in August; and that Mr. Morgan needed much more space to explain the reasons for his honest gloom about agricultural conditions. Such a hungry reader will most appreciate the facts about the radio and the press given by Mr. Postgate, and the astonishingly interesting account of Russia's legal system contributed by Mr. Pritt. The surprising phenomenon of an English K.C. unsparingly attacking the British legal system and finding the Russian preferable has already been commented upon in this journal.

Sir James Purves-Stewart's little book is chiefly interesting for the high praise which this very conservative English doctor honestly bestows upon the many medical institutions he visited in Russia. For the rest he finds Russia thoroughly disagreeable. He does not always understand what he sees: he is apt to get facts and dates wrong. But he records good and bad as he sees it, with naive astonishment that the Soviet doctors are prepared to do so much for so little reward. It has not occurred to him that the best work is done everywhere in the world for other reasons than money, and that when he describes the surprising achievements of Russia in spite of what he describes as "conspicuous absence of adequate stimulus or reward for thrifty or ambitious citizens," he is supplying the best reply to his own complaint. A worthy, honest book by a very conventional observer.

Babel Revisited is in a different category. It is one of the best anti-Bolshevik books we have seen. As a Churchman, Mr. Lockhart is naturally antagonised by the effort to found a society on a purely materialist philosophy. His book is the reasoned and reasonable attack of a man who sees that all he believes in is in danger, and that only by a new spirit and greater courage can his faith be saved from disaster. It is much to the credit of the *Church Times* that it published the series of articles from which this book is composed. Mr. Lockhart ends by arguing that the new Bolshevik religion cannot possible be opposed

> by war, by blockade, by ostracism, by some sort of *cordon sanitaire*. We can oppose it only by rallying against it a spiritual energy more powerful than that which now controls Russia; by confessing our own shortcomings in the past, and by adopting and utilising much of the regenerative economy of Bolshevism, while rejecting the philosophy by which that economy seeks to justify itself.

The "gravest menace since Islam" can only be defeated by

> constructing an entirely new relation between religion and the social and economic problems of our time. Only the social justice of our time can conquer the social justice of Karl Marx; for the true answer to Das Kapital is contained in the Sermon on the Mount.

Here is a line of attack with which one may agree or disagree, but which at least deserves respect.

FOLK SONGS FROM AMERICA

English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians. Collected by CECIL J. SHARP. Two vols. *Oxford University Press.* 35s. each vol.

It is supposed that the mountainy people from whom the late Cecil Sharp and his assistants collected the ballads and songs now reissued in the enlarged second edition of *English Folk Songs from the Southern Appalachians* are descended from North English or Border Scot emigrants of the early eighteenth century. Knotted up in small communities with very little pollenisation from the outer world, they speak not American but an English of a past day; their religion is the Bible Calvinism of the Covenanters, their songs are the Devil's; the splendid scandals of a wilder age commemorated in such ballads as Little Musgrave, Lord Randal, Thomas and Fair Elinor, Young Hunting, and Lamkin.

Nothing that man's mind can make is more toughly twisted than a tune. A journey across an ocean, the dangers and roughnesses of a settler's life, will scarcely jolt a note from its place, and the wear and tear of two centuries will not wrench a cadence from its final. While their singers remember to sing them, they will come true. Studying the tunes in these two volumes one has after a while the impression that one has been studying a breed of cats. For a tune is a domesticated animal, it must house itself in man, and to every true folk-singer his tune is his cat; he will twist its tail a little, teach it his ways, handle it into his personal variant; but for all ownership it keeps its haughty integrity, and whether inherited from a mother or stolen from a neighbour is its own cat still.

Many of these Appalachian tunes were emigrants long before they crossed the Atlantic, brought into England by Irish haymakers, and catlike settled into a new home, and often fitted with words entirely English; but whether in the old world or the new, they wave their unconfined Hibernian tails. It is the tang and raciness and authenticity of folk tunes that make them admirable. The scholar may praise one because it is a perfect example of his Mixolydian mode, the musician reject it as thick-ankled and monotonous; but however truly they speak, they both speak beside the point. The tune's personality romps through their pettifogging.

Yet these exciting creatures *are* domesticated, and as man keeps cats because they kill mice, the folk-singer keeps tunes as a vehicle for stories that entertain, phrases that please him. In that respect we are most of us of the folk-singer's mind.

The first volume of this collection contains seventy-two ballads, the second one hundred and thirty songs, and sixty-six of the lesser fry of hymns, jigs, and nursery songs. It seems that in this division one may assume something like a process: the breaking up of the ballads into songs, and a further disintegration of songs into lesser fry. (I am speaking now of the words. The quality of the tunes shows no variation, save a natural fragmentariness in the jigs, and in the hymns a degeneration into something akin to the pious fol-de-rol of the negro spiritual.) The text of the ballads is notably well-preserved. Incidents and phrases of the old world are jealously kept (out of fourteen versions of *The Wife of Ushers Well*, in only three has *grammarie* guttered into *grammar*), there is little to remind one that these verses have been sung for two centuries out of the country of their origin, unless it may be such instances of antiquarian zeal as in one version of *The Cherry Tree Carol* substitutes "On the fifth day of January" for "on old Christmas morning," or interpolates:

> I fell in love with a Knoxville girl,

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in *The Miller's Apprentice* in acknowledgment of the ballad's alternative title, *The Oxford Tragedy*.

Respect for a good story kept the ballads intact while they were remembered as stories. In many of the songs we find results of remembering the ballads in fragments and round those fragments constructing new lyrics, such as *The False Young Man*, which preserves the tune of *The Demon Lover*, and from its opening of

> Well met, well met, my old true love,

and a notion of desertion evolves an independent lament of a deserted girl, with its peculiar and moving cry,

> When your heart was mine, true love,
> And your head lay on my breast,
> You could make me believe by the falling of your arm
> That the sun rose up in the west.

By this application of personal feeling and experience to traditional remembrance the songs in the second volume gain a local colour, as when the heroine of Billy Boy can

> Make a chicken pie
> Till it makes the preachers cry.

A national colour, too; not only in the sudden emergence of Yankee caution, which adds as a last verse to the grand-mannered lies of *The Derby Ram*,

> The man that owned this ram, sir,
> He must have been awful rich,
> But the man who made this song, sir,
> Was the larn'son of a bitch.

But more by the realism proper to the hardships of life in a new and difficult country, which reverses the conventional tag of a hundred English folk songs into

> For many a fair and pleasant morning
> Turns out a dark and rainy day. . . .

SYLVIA TOWNSEND WARNER

THE RESURRECTION OF PRUSSIANISM

Germany Puts the Clock Back. By EDGAR ANSEL MOWRER. *Lane.* 7*s.* 6*d.*

Mr. Mowrer's book on Germany is a little marred by a redundant colloquialism, or perhaps merely by American idiom. His first chapter *à la* Ludwig seems unnecessary. But when that has been said, he deserves only praise. To those who are watching events in Germany to-day with a feeling of bewilderment, no analysis of the circumstances could be more helpful. A year ago one might have rebuked Mr. Mowrer as too harsh a judge in the matter of Germany; to-day his indictment has been unhappily vindicated. Although this book was finished last autumn, the author had fully grasped all the essentials which have to-day created the terroristic regime; its most hateful factors have long been at work, and Mr. Mowrer was exceptionally conscious of their strength. He shows very exactly how nascent democracy was warped by hostile judges and insolent generals, to the tune of "November treachery." The Allies made many mistakes in dealing with Germany, and none more unfortunate than the insistence upon a small professional army. But, as Mr. Mowrer points out, it was the Weimar constitution which sanctioned the democratic anomaly "that the *Reichswehr* obeyed the President, not the Chancellor or the Parliament." To-day this has a new and poignant significance, for the story that when Hitler left Hindenburg on August 13th last year the old man exclaimed "And such a fellow expects to be Chancellor of Germany! I'll make him a postman!", if it does not exactly record, still accurately reflects, a fact.

Mr. Mowrer has concentrated upon the study of the reactionary spirit now triumphant in Germany. He was never hoodwinked by the *soi-disant* Socialism of the Nazis. He has an apt phrase for men like Captain Göring, into whose hands Prussia has now been delivered—"former officers, most of them of that ne'er-do-well adventurous type that find patriotism an agreeable pretext for indulging a restless nature." The East Prussian Junker scandals, which should have damned Prussianism, but have resulted in its glory, are admirably forecast in the suggestion that "the ruling caste in old Prussia was the worst sort of party, that its members were generally banded together in life and death for the preservation of their very concrete personal privileges," for all their boast of *überparteilichkeit*.

Just because it provides a superb description of the resurrection of Prussianism, Mr. Mowrer's book must not be regarded as a complete picture of contemporary Germany.

"True Germans think with their blood . . ." How sick one becomes of that type of phrase from the semi-Slavonic Prussians! Yet the truer Germany West of the Elbe, or the truer Germany of the working man, is perhaps even now as unconvinced by racialist brutality as it was in 1913 or 1923. Mr. Mowrer himself gives an interesting illustration of the tenacity of "patriots" as compared with that of Communist miners in the Ruhr days. The constancy of electoral opposition to Prussianism has been greater than Mr. Mowrer implies, and it must never be forgotten that the Social Democrats captured over a third of the votes cast in the election of 1912, in spite of all the disadvantages authority could foster. That the despised artisans, in the decade of their power, behaved more like "gentlemen" than their social superiors has indeed spelt catastrophe.

The tale Mr. Mowrer tells might well be called the Tragedy of Tolerance, did it not also deserve to be named the Farce of Factiousness.

NOUVELLE AND SAGA

Letter from an Unknown Woman. By STEFAN ZWEIG. Translated by EDEN and CEDAR PAUL. *Cassell.* 5*s.*

Waiting for a Ship. By MARCUS LAUESEN. Translated by ARTHUR G. CHATER. *Cassell.* 8*s.* 6*d.*

Herr Zweig's *Letter from an Unknown Woman* is the latest volume in Cassell's series of modern *nouvelles*. These stories are about a quarter of the length of an average novel, and everyone who is interested in the novel as an art rather than a pastime should keep an eye on the series, which is well chosen and contains some excellent examples of the brief form of fiction. Most of the stories so far have been translations, but one hopes that in time English novelists too will leave their sagas and try the *nouvelle*. It is curious that while in every other art briefer forms are in fashion, the novel remains as padded and inconsequent as ever; long-windedness even pays. A novel of 350 pages can afford to bore and exasperate for whole chapters, and the reader's interest can still be caught up again. But mistakes in a novel a quarter of this length are fatal. The canny writer of *nouvelles* will set out definitely to give his story the air of a masterpiece, even when it is remote from being so; and this seems to have happened in Zweig's *Letter from an Unknown Woman*. The book is definitely in the genre literature, only essentials are admitted, and yet the whole thing just fails. R., a famous novelist, receives a letter on his forty-first birthday from a woman who has committed suicide; her letter gives the story of her life, which is one of hopeless love for himself (he tries to recall her as he reads); as a girl she had seen him going into the flat opposite, and afterwards had read his books, passed him in the corridor at the opera, and spent a few nights with him in his flat—even this he cannot remember. The letter goes on to its tragic climax, it drops from his nerveless hand, etc. Within its limits the book is well and sympathetically written. Yet there is a faint unreality about the whole story, as though it were an echo of countless similar stories, which makes it thin and pathetic where it should be moving.

Waiting for a Ship is a long book which for once justifies its length. The author, Marcus Lauesen, is a young Danish poet, and this is his first novel. He gives us a remarkably vigorous portrait of an old woman, descendant of a long line of ship-owners, who, despite her eighty years, overrules the children who in hard times have drifted into other business and developed other interests. The family meets for the old lady's birthday, has a round of parties and pays visits in the neighbourhood. The book describes the few weeks between this reunion and her death; and it moves forward to the expected end with a force and liveliness that are quite unexpected. The old lady shows her medals, but she is far from being the stage-part of sentimental drama. Her egotism, her fear of death, as well as her astounding vitality, are realistically shown, and unconsciously one takes up the same attitude to her shared by the other characters in the story. She must die; meanwhile we can only look on as she magnificently insists on living. Her death (when anti-climax might be feared) is finely described. The vitality of the book extends to a large number of minor characters, all sharply drawn, and to a variety of incidents, from a snow-storm to a suicide, which do not clog the action but steadily propel it. Mr. Lauesen has taken the traditional family saga, and by dramatic use of his material whipped it into life. *Waiting for a Ship* is an unusual and vital piece of work.

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MR. FRY ON FRENCH ART

Characteristics of French Art. By ROGER FRY. *Chatto and Windus.* 12s. 6d.

Mr. Fry himself possesses one of the characteristics that he attributes to the French. "Most people," he says, "see only what they expect to see; anything that contradicts that escapes their notice, but the Frenchman tends to have more power to turn round and say to himself, 'How odd! That's like that, is it,' and he enjoys the fact that life is so full of queer and unexpected things. This implies, of course, a great interest in life as it is." He is continually having to qualify this generalization, not to mention all the others. And that is his strength, because he finds that the truth about painting is rarely pure and never simple, and he is quite capable of discarding a beloved theory because there is a painter or a picture that refuses to fit. Being a painter himself must have something to do with these doubts about theories. He has been "had" by them too often in practice.

Mr. Fry's pictorial scholarship is amazing in its extent, though he makes no parade of it. He drops a few hints about Claude's master, Elsheimer, as if they were common knowledge, and they explain a lot about Claude; or he illustrates side by side a Burgundian Madonna and a version of the same theme by Jacopo della Quercia, indicating in a few lines racial characteristics and local influences that were at work on artists in Burgundy and Italy in the fifteenth century, which explains a lot about both of them. But his most impressive quality is his historical perspective, which makes him such a valuable critic of contemporary painting too. He remarks with justifiable pride that seeing Cézanne's paintings at Burlington House last year "alongside of his great contemporaries, I have felt quite unrepentant about the things which I said in the past." He has always failed to be seduced by the merely picturesque, the fashionable, the amusing, the quaint; though he has quite enough wit to admire them in a good painting. It is impossible not to ride the high horse in art criticism, but a good critic like Mr. Fry can always get off when it threatens to run away with him. Though still unrepentant he can observe that "for those who, like myself, have an itch for explaining their reactions to works of art, Poussin is a God-send." Sometimes he does ride the high horse a little too hard, and we get a tongue-twister like "his profound plastic apprehension in the richness of its content and the rhythmic continuity of its movement." It is that sort of thing that gets art-criticism its bad name, and quite rightly so; though it is stupid to hold it up to ridicule and to miss the fine note of authority, the result of a rich experience and a "profound apprehension" of painting, which crops up in Mr. Fry's writing again and again.

This book, as a matter of fact, is unusually free of jargon. Based on lectures, it has an almost chatty note, which makes it very readable. There are eighty illustrations, well chosen and well reproduced for their purpose—that of referring to the text rather than looking handsome. It is a matter of personal taste, but one wishes Mr. Fry, in putting his lectures into book form, had expanded the chapter on Primitive French art. As it is, he devotes as much space to Poussin alone as to all the Primitives, and nearly as much to Degas. The thirteenth-century figure of a boy musician from a house at Rheims is well chosen to illustrate "that sudden alert turning of the mind in its tracks which is the special quality of French art," but the very absence of this quality in the early religious sculptors and glass-painters is just as notable a characteristic. Specifically French characteristics only developed gradually, as artists ceased to be dominated by that curious anonymity and austerity, rooted in impersonal belief, which found a partial recurrence in Poussin and French Classical art in general. Poussin, Mr. Fry notes, "reinforces that sense of measure and proportion which even the most impulsive imaginations neglect at their cost." Elsewhere, he tells us that "the French are on the one hand singularly aware of life, and on the other capable of a great detachment from it, an intense love of the free exercise of the mind." It was this same detachment and this sense of measure and proportion that were responsible for such monuments to pure reason as the cathedrals of Chartres and Bourges.

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A Wanderer in the Promised Land. By NORMAN BENTWICH. *Soncino Press.* 7s. 6d.

Mr. Bentwich was an officer in Lord Allenby's army when it followed the track of Thothmes the Great and Ramses from Egypt into Palestine; and his spirit was stirred in him. Since then, he has lived in the land of his ancestors, and has wandered in it as Scott wandered on the Borders. There does not seem to be an inch which he has not explored, from Aleppo to Ezion-geber; and every place comes to him clothed in an immortal history. He has followed the excavations of Athlit, which carry us back six thousand years, and has traced the marches of Saladin and Napoleon. He scans the Wailing Wall of Jerusalem with the feelings natural to a patriot, and feels a thrill as he surveys the splendid ruins of Samaria. Since, in our youth, we read Thomson's *Land and the Book*, we have had few such pleasures as Mr. Bentwich has given us. Even George Adam Smith's *Historical Geography*, though more systematic, is perhaps less charming.

But Mr. Bentwich has an eye toward the future as well as on the past. He is a Zionist, and plainly believes that the prosperity of the country depends on the diligence and ability of the Jewish immigrants. He describes with zest what has already been done—how the Jordan and the Yarmuk have been harnessed to electricity, how new towns have sprung up and old ones have revived, and how, even on the shores of the Dead Sea, a thriving life, teeming with the potentiality of wealth beyond the dreams of avarice, is beginning to appear. Whether the potentiality will become actual, depends on the maintenance of peace between Jew and Arab; one of the many tasks of the Mandatory Power, and one that will tax her to the utmost.

Another word. This is an excellent book; but, as Johnson said of his *Ramblers*, it can be made better; and if, as we hope, it reaches a second edition, we suggest a few improvements in matters of detail. Let Mr. Bentwich cut out the repetitions, of which there are far too many; and let him omit the little scraps of information which none of his readers require. Anybody who does not know already that Scaliger was a scholar, Silabo a geographer, or Tacitus a Roman and a contemporary of Titus, will have no use for the book. The table of dates is rightly marked as approximate; but, as we *know* that Napoleon attacked El Arish in February, 1799, it is unnecessary to put his invasion in 1797, when he was a thousand miles away.

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Scottish Abbeys and Social Life. By G. G. COULTON. *Cambridge University Press.* 12s. 6d.

A revised and amplified edition of the Rhina Lectures delivered by Dr. Coulton at Edinburgh in 1931, this critical survey of monasticism in Scotland from Columbia to the Reformation covers a wide field, for if the specific venue is Scotland, monasticism generally, with all its religious, social, political and economic implications, is brought into review. Dr. Coulton is at once monasticism's most sympathetic and severest critic. Sympathetic, because he understands so clearly how attractive to the thoughtful mind must have been withdrawal from a secular life as crudely turbulent as that of the Middle Ages was everywhere, and particularly in Scotland; and severe, because research has steadily whittled away the enormous claims made by earlier historians for monasticism in the fields of learning, art and handicraft. It is the particular quality of Dr. Coulton's studies of the Middle Ages that they compel us to see them as those who lived in them saw them; and in none of his works has this quality been more conspicuous than in this study of the orders in Scotland, where both the merits and demerits of the religious life were emphasised by secular conditions; and where we can watch the monasteries from being abodes of poverty growing into wealthy almshouses for the sons, legitimate and illegitimate, of the nobility. Here, then, is not only a valuable monograph on Scottish monasticism, but an illuminating study of the attitudes of mind that contributed to its rise and downfall.

A Plea for a New Law. By EUSTACE J. HARVEY. *Oxford University Press.* 24s. *net.*

This is a "Reformist" legal book written in the first person singular. Its subject matter is the conflict arising between two innocent persons when a third party has committed theft or fraud with regard to goods or negotiable securities. The author analyses the existing law as set out in various statutes and over 150 decided cases, finds it deficient, and advocates the substitution of a new code based on a trial in each case as to which party has been the more or the less diligent in taking measures to obviate or detect the fraud. The author's attack on the law as it stands is in many respects well founded and adequately documented. His solutions, however, while in some cases possibly feasible, are in many others so theoretic as to multiply litigation in the pursuit of ideal justice. Incidentally, in many cases where the old case law is too intolerably bad, there is frequently perpetrated that pious abomination before the Lords which consists in reversing a previous and binding decision of the House by purporting to find an in fact *ad hoc* and artificial distinction.

GRAMOPHONE NOTES

THE most interesting recordings issued recently have undoubtedly been Verdi's *Otello* and Stravinsky's *Soldier's Tale*. Not only interesting in themselves but as an opposition in aims and methods, as the simplest and most vivid statement of an urgent problem. I do not agree that comparisons are odious (except to one of the parties compared), though I agree that they can sometimes be stupid. It may seem stupid to compare works so widely differentiated in inspiration and technique as the two in question, but it is only by such a comparison that we can arrive at any definite point of view about contemporary music. If we are going to regard music as having only functional values, like the *Gebrauchs-musik* of Hindemith or the *musique d'ameublement* of Erik Satie, then criticism becomes a mere end of term examination with markings for different subjects—Verdi, 10 out of 10 for operatic melody, Stravinsky 10 out of 10 for abstract rhythm.

It is this specialist attitude towards the different sides of the art, the dissection of music into its different elements, that accounts for the short-winded quality of so many modern musical movements, and explains why so many avenues of musical experiment have led only to a blind alley, like the final section of the *Soldier's Tale*.

The official description of this work as *Histoire du Soldat, lue, jouée et dansée* should not blind us to the fact that it is essentially abstract music. It is not, like *Petrushka*, a marionette drama in which the "On with the motley" theme is presented in a manner sufficiently stylised to appeal to the sophisticated. The Princess, the Soldier and the Devil are merely pegs on which to hang abstract rhythmic patterns.

The waltz, ragtime and tango, which the soldier plays on his violin, are not parodies like the polkas of Wetton or Berners, nor are they meant to have the René Clair-like evocative significance, the bal-mosette sentimentality of the valzes of Auric. They are like the familiar objects, the bottle of wine, the guitar, and the pack of cards used by the cubist painters because their very familiarity would draw added attention to their geometrical distortion. To dance to these movements is really as absurd as reading the news in the sections of *Le Journal* used by Picasso or

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THE FUTURE OF NEUTRALITY By Professor H. A. SMITH
JOHN GALSWORTHY By Mrs. R. H. GRETTON
THE ECONOMIC CHAOS IN CENTRAL EUROPE By Professor FRIEDRICH HERTZ
THE COMMUNIST MENACE IN SOUTH AMERICA By EVAN HARDEY
INTO THE STRONGHOLD OF THE ASSASSINS By LAURENCE LOCKHART
THE EVOLUTION OF THE SOLO SONG AND ITS FIRST SINGERS By CLEMENT ANTROBUS HARRIS
FOREIGN AFFAIRS By GEORGE GLASGOW
THE DEBT CONFERENCE; THE ADVENT OF HERR HITLER.
LITERARY SUPPLEMENT AND REVIEWS OF BOOKS.

PUBLISHING OFFICE, 19, CURSITOR STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

Gris in one of their "abstracts." Apart from the two short chorales which point forward to his neo-classical period, *Soldier's Tale* consists entirely of an objective juggling with rhythm, or rather metre, for there can be no true rhythm where there is no melodic life. Like Gertrude Stein, Stravinsky chooses the drabbest and least significant phrases for the material of his experiments, because if the melodic line had life dissection would be impossible. A statement like "every day they were gay there, they were regularly gay there every day," etc. (I quote from memory) from Gertrude Stein's *Helen Furr* and *Georgine Skeene* has no particular value as content, least of all is it meant to be gay, it is merely material for a fantasia in rhythmic values, whose effect would be equally appreciated by someone with no knowledge of English whatsoever. Similarly, the melodic fragments, one can hardly call them themes, in *Soldier's Tale* are completely meaningless in themselves, they are merely successions of notes that can be divided up into groups of 3, 5, and 7, and set against other mathematical groupings.

Such a movement as the *Little Concert*, particularly the middle section, must surely represent the absolute nadir of musical invention. It is with considerable relief that we reach the final page where the thematic poverty of the work achieves its logical development in a cadenza for drums alone. There is no further progress possible on these lines, and this section has much the same satisfaction of finality as the map of that pioneer of distraction the Bellman, which was, if I remember rightly, "a perfect and absolute blank."

This complete cul-de-sac is, of course, due to the fact that although Stravinsky has immense executive talent, few composers have been endowed with less melodic faculty. He has, it is true, concentrated on melodic line in his later neo-classical works, but the melody in these is purely synthetic—a ludicrously misguided attempt to create a creature of flesh and blood out of fossil fragments. Melody cannot be learnt in later life like counterpoint, nor is it an element that can be separated from others like rhythm—it is the all-embracing element in music from which harmony, counterpoint and rhythm should logically evolve.

When we turn from *Soldier's Tale* to *Otello* we are conscious of an immense feeling of power and freedom on the composer's part. Verdi reached no cul-de-sac through the dissection of music into its elements, his supreme melodic faculty carried him through triumphantly to *Otello* and *Falstaff*, written in his seventies, and although some may say that it is the increasing richness of the accompaniment that distinguishes these operas from his earlier works, this greater harmonic and orchestral complexity is conditioned by the increasing power and flexibility of the melodic line. He did not seek technique for its own sake, because his technique followed naturally as the servant of his inspiration, as is the case with all genuinely musical minds. If a motorist spends all his time with his head in the bonnet there must be something grievously wrong with either the motorist or the car.

It is remarkable how much less faded *Otello* (a work written fifty years ago by a man of seventy-four) seems than *Soldier's Tale*, which was written fifteen years ago by a man in his prime. The one is like a flowing cornucopia, the other like an empty cocktail-shaker. Unfortunately, it is no use the young composer deliberately imitating Verdi in an attempt to get out of the *impasse* created for him by Stravinsky. He must achieve his own lyricism as Verdi achieved his. No melody at all as in *Soldier's Tale* is better than synthetic melody, as in the *Symphonie des Psaumes*.

As pure recording both sets of records are to be recommended. Combinations like that used by Stravinsky (clarinet, bassoon, cornet, fiddle, double-bass and drums) come out very well on the gramophone, though the drums occasionally give some trouble. American jazz records are the only ones that do justice to percussion.

The *Soldier's Tale* is issued on three 12in. records (Columbia LX 197-9), conducted by the composer, and admirably played by seven French musicians, whom I have not space to enumerate.

Otello is an album worth getting in full (H.M.V. sixteen 12in. records). The solo singing is better than the ensembles, and Apollo Granforte carries off the honours with a magnificent performance as Iago. Nicolo Fusati and Maria Carbone are both excellent as Otello and Desdemona, though Fusati is more successful in dramatic passages than in quietly lyrical ones, and hardly does full justice to "Già nella notte densa." But in a work of this length there are bound to be occasional imperfections and the general standard of performance is splendid. The orchestra is from La Scala and the conductor Carlo Sabajno.

CONSTANT LAMBERT

Playtime

CALIBAN'S PROBLEM CONTEST

PROBLEM 10.—DANGEROUS AGES

[Contributed by Mr. L. C. Clarke.]

A precocious kid, young Fred is. Seated in his uncle's office, he was making calculations on a sheet of paper. In due course he announced the result as follows:

"Uncle George, if you add together your age, and Dad's age, and mine, the total is the same as the product you get if you multiply my sister's age by itself."

"So it is," said Uncle George.

"And if you multiply your age by itself," said Fred, "and multiply my age by itself, and multiply Dad's age by itself, and add the three products together, the total is the same as the product you get when you multiply Grandmamma's age by itself."

"How can you multiply an age by itself?" asked Uncle George.

"Well," said Fred, "I mean I've multiplied or added the various figures that represent our ages in years."

"I remember your father," said Uncle George, "sitting in this office when he was a nipper like you and I was a junior partner. He was just as fond of doing sums as you are."

Find the ages of (1) *Fred* (2) *his sister*, (3) *Fred's father*, (4) *Uncle George*, (5) *Grandmamma*.

PROBLEM 8.—MURDER ON THE UNDERGROUND

Macaroni murdered Zucco between Charing Cross and Trafalgar Square. His confederate, Zambaglione, had shepherded Zucco on to the wrong train at Piccadilly. Macaroni was in the offing, trailed Zucco to Charing Cross (where he selected an empty compartment in a north-bound train) and promptly stabbed him. Then he dashed up the escalator (plenty of time for this) and was "spotted" while rebooking by Detective Sharp.

I have given credit also to solutions to all intents and purposes the same, in which Zucco changes trains at Trafalgar Square and is stabbed by Macaroni before the latter dashes up to rebook.

In these "inferential-factual" problems a feasible solution, such as the above, must be preferred to one that taxes credulity. Hence I cannot admit Buffo as the murderer; even with Sir Malcolm Campbell to drive him he could hardly hope to make the train in time. And in any case what chances had he of making contact with Zucco? Nor can I admit Zambaglione. To make out a case for him involves unjustified assumptions (*a*) as to the location of Chianti's restaurant, and (*b*) as to the meaning of the phrase "between 12.20 a.m. and 12.25 a.m."

PROBLEM 7.—KAFFIRS

A set of Low's cartoons is awarded to:

E. F. Raney, 62 Warrington Road, Harrow, Middlesex.

There were seventy-nine correct and four incorrect solutions. On the cumulative point basis, *eight* points are awarded for this problem.

"POSSIBLES" TO DATE

CORRECT SOLUTIONS to the first SEVEN problems have been received from:

F. Aylmer, Dr. L. C. Adam, R. Black, L. C. Clarke, H. W. Carver, G. F. Dixon, A. L. Harris, G. Struan Marshall, R. Martin, "Alms," L. A. Pye, "Pert," J. Procter, S. T. Shovelton, J. B. Sanders, E. T. O. Slater, T. Strange, H. Snow, J. L. Smith, F. W. Thompson, G. F. Thorold, G. T. Whiteman, D. A. Ziegler.

PRIZES FOR PROBLEM-SOLVERS

One set of Low's cartoons is awarded weekly to the sender of a correct solution selected at random.

In addition a record is kept of the names of senders of all correct solutions submitted. All solvers qualify for book prizes on a cumulative-point basis. For particulars see THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION of December 24th.

Solutions to the current problem must be addressed to CALIBAN, c/o THE NEW STATESMAN AND NATION, 10 Gt. Queen Street, London, W.C.2, and must reach this office not later than the next Tuesday but one after the date of publication.

TRINCULO'S CROSSWORD

Will crossword solvers who are keen on Trinculo's reappearance kindly let me have a postcard? I cannot guarantee that the crossword will be restored, but at least the Editor is anxious to know how much support it commands.

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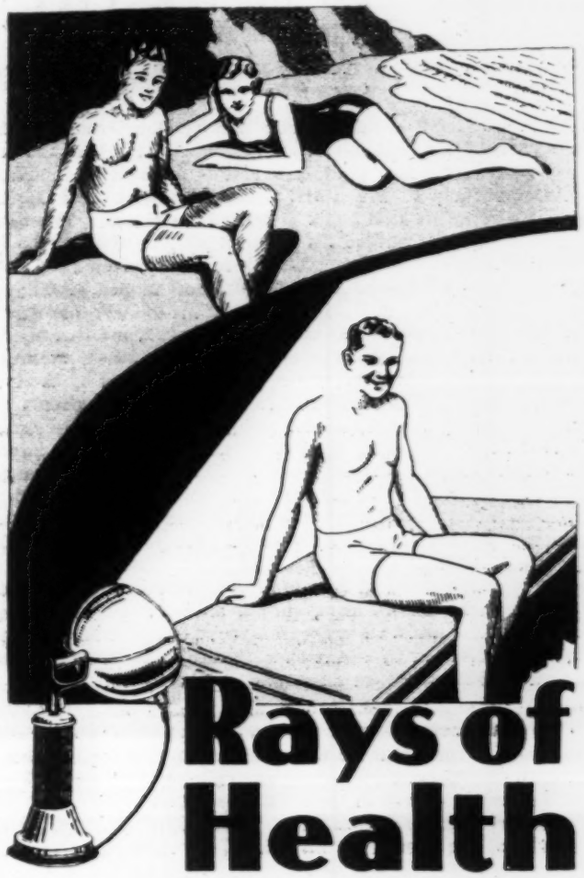

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THE WEEK IN THE CITY

By TOREADOR

SOUND MONEY AND UNSOUND BANKS IN AMERICA—OUR BALANCE OF PAYMENTS—SELFRIDGES

"BANK Holiday" in this island of impregnable institutions has such pleasant associations that it is difficult to realise that the same words spell ruin or despair at this moment to thousands of American homes. When Mr. Cyrus B. Pushing of El Dorado, Mon., reads in his local paper that the First Home Town Bank, in which he has deposited his life's savings (or whatever he has rescued from the Wall Street slump), has been given a ten days' holiday, he knows that when the bank's doors reopen he will only be allowed to draw out a tiny fraction of his money, that part of the bank's frozen assets may never be unthawed, and that he may never recover dollar for dollar of his deposits. In the meantime he runs the risk of not having his cheques accepted by the local provision store. This situation in some degree confronts the people in twenty-two out of the forty-eight States of the Union where banks have either declared banking holidays or limited the withdrawals of their depositors. The crisis has, of course, been precipitated by the depositors themselves—by the rush to withdraw notes or gold for hoarding. The new Banking Act, sponsored by Senator Couzens, which gives powers to the State Governors to declare banking holidays or impose restrictions on withdrawals, is designed merely to prevent one depositor from withdrawing his money in advance of another. It is not a cure for the banking crisis. The depreciation of banks' assets has gone too far to be off-set by restrictions: radical reconstruction of the American banking system must now be undertaken.

* * *

President Hoover's policy for the banking crisis was to allow the banks to remain under the same management, good, bad or crooked, and to bolster up their undermined positions by loans. Not that every bank was saved. In 1931, 2,298 banks closed their doors, involving $1,692 millions of deposits. In 1932, 1,453 banks went the same way, involving $730 millions of deposits. Of the 5,000 banks which received loans from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation, about 600 finally passed into the receiver's hands. Incidentally, whenever the Reconstruction Finance Corporation made a loan, it took a first charge on the bank's assets, so that the depositor often found himself worse off than before. The new banking crisis which confronts the President-Elect is the result of the depreciation of mortgage assets coming on top of the depreciation of Stock Exchange collateral. Farm property and urban real estate have sunk to values which have caused nearly every country bank to become insolvent. Indeed, it is no exaggeration to say that outside the leading New York institutions there is not a sound bank left in America. The time for patchwork is past. Mr. Roosevelt must rebuild the banking system. A few years ago there were 30,000 banks in America. To-day there are about 19,000 but the number is still far too large. Thousands of small "home-town" banks must go and stronger institutions with branches must take their place. At present only seven States, of which California alone is of any important size, permit branch banking. Banks which cannot exist independently must be merged together. Unfreezable assets must be written off and depositors must face the loss. Above all, managements must be changed. It is something to hear that nineteen bankers have already been indicted on the charge of "intent to fraud": but 1,900 at least should be indicted for criminal incompetence.

* * *

The inflationist party in America has now a great chance of making good. To prolong banking holidays, restrict withdrawals, and put banks into receivership is deflation of the madly dangerous sort. It brings trade to a complete standstill or reduces it to barter. In some States barter has already become a highly organised system. In some towns new currency is in circulation. One, for example, is circulating wooden money representing certificates of the local Chamber of Commerce, redeemable from dividends consigned to it from a frozen-up bank. According to the *Economist*, the total bank deposits in America have fallen in three years from $55 billions to $42 billions, a decline of nearly 24 per cent., while the average turnover of deposits, excluding New York City, is now twelve times a year instead of twenty-three. Nothing so savage as this degree of monetary deflation has ever been seen before. The inflationist party can now argue with some force that only genuine inflation can save America. If, in the reconstruction of the banking system, depositors have to face the loss of a proportion of their deposits, should they not be allowed to *borrow* up to the extent of their losses and should not the banks be guaranteed by the Government against bad debts? Mr. Roosevelt's Secretary of the Treasury is believed to be a "sound money" man, but what is the good of "sound money" when there are no sound banks?

* * *

Our Exchange Equalisation Fund is now busy supporting dollars by selling the sterling it has recently acquired from the Bank of England. But there is no national "flight from the dollar." If there were, the United States would be off gold in a week. The average American has still no confidence in the pound sterling, and the average bank depositor would not know how to convert his dollars into foreign currency even if he could. The present selling of dollars comes from (*a*) "bear" speculators in New York and other financial centres, not necessarily of American origin; (*b*) foreign investors who wish to hedge against their American investments; (*c*) withdrawals of foreign money; (*d*) seasonal trade demand for sterling. The Board of Trade estimates of our international payments on trading account explain why the Exchange Equalisation Fund has had difficulty in preventing a rise in the exchange value of the pound. We have apparently reduced our adverse balance on international account from £90 millions to £30 millions. The surplus of imports in 1932 was only £289 millions against £408 millions in 1931, while our "invisible income" was £259 millions against £304 millions.

UNITED KINGDOM BALANCE OF PAYMENTS.

	1930.	1931.	1932.
	(In millions £s.)		
Excess of imports of merchandise and silver bullion and specie	386	408	289
Total	386	408	289
Estimated excess of Government receipts from overseas*	19	14	4
Estimated net national shipping income†	105	80	70
Estimated net income from overseas investments	220	170	140
Estimated net receipts from short interest and commissions	55	30	30
Estimated net receipts from other sources	15	10	15
Total	414	304	259
Estimated total credit or debit balance on items specified above	+ 28	— 104	— 30

* Including some items on loan accounts.

† Including disbursements by foreign ships in British ports.

I would add that the *Economist* estimates our 1932 adverse balance to be £20 millions, while there are statisticians who believe that it does not exist.

* * *

According to the statistics of retail trade published in the Bank of England Statistical Summary, the New Year started badly for the shops. Only the sales of sports and travelling goods show an increase over 1932, and stocks continue to show declines. Until retailers have sufficient confidence to increase their stocks we need not look for better trade. The annual accounts recently published by the London stores show the following declines in profits: John Barker 11.4 per cent., Dickins and Jones 5.3 per cent., Harrods 8.4 per cent., and Selfridges 14.7 per cent. Only Swan and Edgar and William Whiteley show a small increase in profits. The most interesting accounts were those of Selfridges. This company had to pay £76,487 in respect of its guarantee of Whiteleys ordinary dividends (this for the year ending January, 1932), and apply £125,000 to writing down investments in subsidiary companies. The Whiteley guarantee which remains in force until 1942 has cost Selfridges in the five years to January, 1933, £288,031. In the current year the payment will be £63,541. The finance of the new Selfridge building also involves the parent company in heavy commitments, but Mr. Gordon Selfridge is very optimistic about the new business it will bring. The "managing director's account at interest" has increased from £74,563 to £154,792. In a charming speech to shareholders Mr. Gordon Selfridge was engagingly frank about this loan which he described as the least satisfactory item on the credit side of the balance-sheet. "I," he said, "much more than anyone else wish to see it removed. There have been various causes for its presence, one being the unhappy income tax. But no matter—I shall not, of course, increase it, I shall take it out of the sheet as soon as I can." (General tears from shareholders).

London Amusements

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All at 2.30 p.m. unless otherwise stated.

ALDWYCH. A Bit of a Test. Wed., Fri.

DRURY LANE. Wild Violets. Wed. & Sat.

DUCHESS. Children in Uniform. Wed., Sat.

GLOBE. Doctor's Orders. Wed. & Sat.

HIPPODROME. The One Girl. Wed., Th., S.

QUEEN'S. Once in a Lifetime. Wed., Sat.

ST. MARTIN'S. The Green Bay Tree. Tu.W.F.

SAVOY. Jolly Roger. Wed. & Sat.

THEATRES

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MR. J. M. KEYNES' ADDRESS

The annual general meeting of the National Mutual Life Assurance Society was held on Wednesday last at 39, King Street, E.C.2. Mr. J. M. Keynes, C.B., chairman of the society, presiding, said:—

The new business which we obtained in 1932 shows an appreciable falling off, compared with recent years, at £536,806. Our new business organisation has not had an easy task during the past year, as, apart from the abnormal conditions which have prevailed, there is no doubt that the postponement a year ago of our valuation and bonus distribution has affected our new business. I am hopeful, however, that these special difficulties may now be at an end, since my statement of our position to-day is, I think, one of the most satisfactory which it has fallen to me to make since I have been chairman. In connection with our new business, I would draw your attention to several new schemes of assurance introduced during the past year and described in the Annual Report. In particular, we have introduced, in conjunction with an old-established building society, a scheme for granting mortgages on house property, which combines the benefits and protection of life assurance with the facilities provided by a building society.

Improved Position

It will be within your memory that in my speech last year I stated that we had suffered during 1931 a depreciation, and realised loss on our investments equal to 15.8 per cent. of our Stock Exchange securities, and 11.8 per cent. of our total assets. I expressed the belief, however, that this might be the reflection of purely temporary conditions, and that it would be wise to postpone our valuation until the real position was clearer. I am glad to report that the advisability of postponement has been borne out by the subsequent course of events. During the past year we have not only recovered the whole of the depreciation and realised loss incurred in 1931, but have also secured a useful balance of profit, amounting to £33,527, over the two years taken together. Indeed, the appreciation and realised profit on our investments which we have secured during 1932 amounts to no less than £642,541, being 18.3 per cent. of the mean fund employed in Stock Exchange securities and 14.1 per cent. of our total mean assets. It may be interesting to mention that the appreciation has been fairly evenly spread over our fixed interest securities and our ordinary shares, having been 17.6 per cent. in the case of the former and 22.8 per cent. in the case of the latter.

Turning to the items which make up our trading profit during the past year, the net rate of interest earned has declined from £4 9s. 11d. per cent. in 1931 to £4 5s. 8d. per cent. Since our funds at the beginning of the year were taken, for the purpose of calculating the amount of the mean fund, at the prices of December 31st, 1930, the 1932 interest yield approximately reflects the present level of fixed interest securities, though any further fall in the general level of interest would naturally affect our interest yield in 1933. On the other hand, our unusually large holding of British Government securities represents a potential source of increased income in the future as and when we are able to reinvest in higher yielding securities.

Our mortality profits in 1932 were substantial—more than double those of the previous year—the incidence being unusually favourable and the actual amount paid in claims by death, viz., £149,311, the lowest in any year since 1926. Both expenses and commission payments show an absolute saving, though the reduction in the latter is due to the decline in the volume of new business. The result is seen in a decline in our expense ratio from 13.7 per cent. of premium income in 1931 to 12.7 per cent. in 1932.

Bringing the above and other sundry items together, our trading profit for the two years 1931-32, calculated on the same basis as in previous years, has been as follows:—

Net miscellaneous profits from mortality, etc. ..	£124,877.
Interest earnings in excess of 3 per cent. on mean fund, excluding carry forward	136,764
Interest earned on the surplus carried forward from 1930	18,076
	£279,717

In view of these results your Board have felt sure that you would wish them to make the valuation and distribution of bonus, postponed from last year. It would be foolish to pretend that the prospects are yet clear or that we have escaped for certain from the phase of violent fluctuations in the financial and economic world. But on any test, however stringent, which can be reasonably applied to the actual results of the past two years, the bonus has been comfortably earned, and it should, therefore, be distributed. A Board which sought to make provision against wholly uncertain and unpredictable contingencies, arising not out of its own affairs but out of those of the world at large, might never declare a bonus at all.

Bonus Reserve Valuation

This being so, our Actuary has given anxious consideration to the question whether the time has not come for changing over from the old-fashioned and now somewhat misleading methods of valuation, in which we have followed tradition for many years past, to the more scientific method already adopted by one or two offices, known as Bonus Reserve Valuation.

The technical details of the new method have been explained at length by the Actuary in his Valuation Report which you have already received. You will have seen that, whilst the reserves required by the new method do not differ very greatly from those required by the old method, they are slightly more stringent, requiring us to set aside out of profit an additional sum of nearly £20,000. If I may venture as a layman to sum up the essence of the change, I should do so as follows:—

The estimated liability under a life policy consists in the excess of the present value of the sum assured, together with bonuses already declared, over the present value of the future premiums payable, the "present value" being calculated on the basis of certain assumptions which may or may not be realised. There should, therefore, be a substantial margin over and above the sum thus estimated in order to provide for unforeseen contingencies which might upset the expectations upon which the estimate has been based. When a life office values its liabilities in order to ascertain what surplus is properly available for present distribution, it must not take credit for this margin, because if bonuses were to be declared corresponding to it the margin would be used up and the provision would have disappeared. Thus actuaries have to devise some method of distinguishing between this undistributable margin and the surplus over and above it which is properly available for immediate distribution. The method most commonly adopted in the past has ensured that the margin required to meet future contingencies is withheld from immediate distribution by adopting arbitrary assumptions as to rates of interest, mortality, etc., so much less favourable than those actually experienced as to bear but little relation to them. The result has been to make it difficult even for an expert to assess what the net provision arrived at in this way really amounts to. For this reason it has become common for actuaries to make at the same time, for their own guidance, a supplementary valuation based on assumptions which, whilst distinctly conservative, are in reasonably close relationship to the facts. There is then no difficulty in setting up an additional specific reserve against unforeseen changes in terms of the future rate of bonus for which this margin will provide each year if no adverse circumstances arise. This method, which is appropriately known as the Bonus Reserve method of valuation, gives a scientific measure of what the provision which the office is making really amounts to. In our own case the reserve which we are making is one which will provide bonuses of 30s. per cent. per annum during the lives of our fully participating policies, and 15s. in the case of our low premium policies, if the assumptions on which the valuation is based are realised.

A More Adaptable Method

I have said that the assumptions as to future rates of interest, mortality and expenses, whilst in a definite relationship to present experience, are made conservatively. This is illustrated by the fact that we are now able to declare for the years 1931 and 1932 bonuses, not of 30s. per annum, but of 42s. 6d. on our whole-life, and 37s. 6d. on our endowment assurance fully participating policies. Moreover these rates are comfortably within what we are earning in present conditions, and have been declared without drawing upon the results of our favourable mortality, our low expenses, or our capital appreciation in the current year. Our Actuary is satisfied that they can be maintained in future, unless there is a considerable further fall in the net rate of interest or serious developments, affecting all institutions alike, in the financial circumstances of the world and of this country. Furthermore, if important changes occur hereafter which appear to be of an enduring character, our new method of valuation is more readily adaptable to them than were the rigid assumptions used previously.

I may mention that if, as we hope, we can maintain the rates of bonus now declared, the results will be even more advantageous to policyholders than are those of policies which have been in force for a period of years and are now maturing for payment.

Your Board have considered carefully whether we should now return to the routine of annual valuation and distribution which, on general grounds, we much prefer. But, for the reasons given in the Actuary's Report, we think that it would be better not to do so at present. We cannot be sure that we are yet immune from violent, temporary fluctuations in security values, and we believe that it conduces to greater equanimity in investment policy if we have less anxiety as to the precise market value of our securities over short periods; but we shall, of course, continue as in the past (though there are but few offices which follow this course) to inform you at each Annual Meeting of the market value of our securities at the end of each year.

During the year Mr. G. H. Recknell, who had succeeded Mr. Geoffrey Marks as Actuary in 1928, has also succeeded him as our Chief Officer. I am glad to say that Mr. Marks remains on the Board, but he has ceased to be our Chief Officer, after holding that position for nearly forty years. The National Mutual as it is to-day is largely his creation. He has been, indeed, our second founder. At the close of to-day's proceedings I shall ask you to approve the acquisition by the Society of an admirable portrait of Geoffrey Marks, hung in this room to-day, painted by Mr. Henry Lamb. Mr. Marks has devoted all his gifts of mind and character and temperament to this institution and its problems, and to the individuals who, even in the case of so abstract a thing as a life office, really constitute it. He has been a great educator, as the personnel of other life offices in this country exist to testify, a wise innovator and pioneer, and a beloved human being. He carries with him into his retirement our affectionate best wishes.

The report and accounts were adopted.

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